

A COMPASSIONATE OUTREACH MINISTRY

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ABSTRACT
A COMPASSIONATE OUTREACH MINISTRY

by

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United Theological Seminary, 2003

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The project combined biblical and theological insights and concrete examples of empowerment, dignity, and the love of God to the human spirit through a church-based thrift store in Savannah, Georgia. A store, the Bargain Box Too! was opened in the community and served as an outreach ministry of the St. Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal Church for local residents and those in drug recovery. The learning experiences were framed by Scripture, Theology, and Hands-on Experience. The project was evaluated by survey forms and customer feedback. The results indicated it was a viable ministry in the community.

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DEDICATION

To

Maternal Grandparents

Eddie Murray (1900-1975)
And
Rhoda Murray (1916-2002)

&

Paternal Grandparents

Leo Daniels, Sr. (1915-
And
Vivian Daniels (1920-2002)

INTRODUCTION

This project was developed to empower a variety of persons whom, for whatever reasons, felt their hope was fleeting. The need for a thrift store, an outreach ministry of Saint Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in Savannah, Georgia was the vision of the pastor, but became a reality through the writer. The pastor, a five-year community resident who knew the needs of the neighborhood and people challenged the church to respond to that need. Given the context and the large number of problems, the church decided on several approaches to tackle various aspects of the conditions facing the residents. At the forefront of all the ministries was love and compassion. “The word ‘compassion’ originally comes from the two Latin roots, *cum* meaning “with” and *pati* meaning “to suffer”—thus, “to suffer with.”¹ One side, whether it be a neighborhood, organization, or individual, is hurting and the other side, which can be an individual, organization such as a church, or another entity is willing to enter that realm of hurt and suffer with that hurting side. Compassion is much more than a general benevolence or pleasant disposition.

Over the years, several compassionate ministries were started at Saint Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal Church: a school for boys in second through twelfth grades—the Saint Paul Academy for Boys, several feeding ministries, Sunday morning

¹ Bryan P. Stone, *Compassionate Ministry* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), xi.

breakfast for the homeless, Kid's Café—a weekday afternoon feeding program for children in the community, Community Kitchen—an afternoon feeding program for the local community, an ice cream parlor—The Heavenly Dee-Lite Ice Cream Parlor, a foster care ministry, a brick masonry program—The Technical Training Unit, and an after-school program partnered with a local organization, Urban Hope, that provides tutoring to elementary school children. One additional outreach ministry was a thrift store, the Bargain Box Too! This writer took the vision, prayed over it, nursed it, cuddled it, wrestled with it, and embraced it as her own and allowed it to become an extension of who she is while watching love and hope evolve.

She had no idea that the practice of receiving second-hand items as a child would be an impetus for an outreach ministry later in life. The concept of family and community being together and sharing is nothing new to the writer. She is from a large extended family that shares. It is clear now that she was part of a family circle that treated the art of passing things on as a rite of passage. Her older cousins passed their clothing to her and her sister. It was always a happy time when clothes were passed. The outfits that the previous owners had outgrown were always worn proudly by the new owners. Only in later years was it realized that some of the clothes might have been old, yet this was not a concern. Sheila simply enjoyed getting items that a family member had owned. It made her feel that she was growing up since the previous owners were older than she. Her mother, being one of twelve children, learned early that she had to share. These values were passed on to her children. Whenever "second-hand" items were received, it made the Daniels' girls feel extra special if the items were from special friends, favorite relatives, or older cousins. They were taught to see God in everything.

Churches in various cities across the country are realizing that they cannot separate themselves from the life that does or does not exist in their communities. The call to community is a unique calling and is experienced as a promise. The hearers sense they are invited into a fellowship and must be able to fulfill their desire to be faithful to God. The conviction that they are called by God to this context of discipleship is reassuring. When God calls people, God sustains them in answering the call. When God sustains, life is blessed. There are many churches that are involved in outreach ministries by following God's mandate to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit and care for the sick, and love thy neighbor as self.

Economic instability and corporate downsizing, coupled with technological growth in some areas and technological changes in others has caused many Americans to experience setbacks and situations that they never imagined would be part of their lives. Homelessness, unemployment, broken family structures, and the ravages of substance abuse have further affected many lives. Job layoffs, plant closings, rightsizing, economic injustices, and salary cuts are issues that are confronting people around the world. Impoverished and poor neighborhoods have been equally affected. The Church has been called upon and challenged to meet the needs of many hurting people.

When the author started this project, she had served in two other urban churches that had distinct personalities. Each church was called to community in different ways. Cities, because they are heavily populated, are confronted on a larger scale with mental illness, homelessness, illiteracy, the poor, the despondent, and the drug addicted. Too often, churches want to put a band-aid over the problem rather than seeking a solution that will lead to empowerment. Unfortunately, churches become a referral service away

from them rather than a place of refuge. They refuse to satisfy the infinite thirst for the love of Jesus Christ by serving within their area.

Jesus is the divine example of humble service. Service becomes crucial. In John 13:1-8, Jesus portrays the divine action of humble service by washing the feet of the disciples. The true nature of love and service within the Christian community should be based on the exhibition of love of Jesus. Jesus knew that the lesson of love expressed in humble service would be necessary for the Church to exist and grow. Servanthood is girded by the divine command of love. The command to love has never worn out throughout the centuries. Love is a matter of will and service becomes crucial. The servant must have the heart for moving beyond being judgmental. Love accepts even though it may not approve. The gospel challenges that we love unconditionally and accept people as they are and where they are.

The initial thrust of the project was to serve as a vehicle of financial support for the St. Paul Academy for Boys, but the purpose changed. As a compassionate outreach ministry, the model served the disinherited. It offered people a place to shop for goods at an affordable price, provided job opportunities for recovering substance abusers, placed a business in the community, and demonstrated the awesome love of God. It also helped transform feelings of self-hatred and low self-esteem into positive feelings of self-confidence and self-worth. A rare closeness with the church and the community was etched/ created. A new paradigm of love, respect, empowerment, and dignity in a world of poverty, hopelessness, and despair is evident. To love neighbor as self became eminent, not to bridge the gap between abject poverty and inordinate wealth.

The physical area where the project took place is located less than two miles from the downtown area that tourists visit regularly and where the poorest of the poor reside.

The project is located in an area in transition. The needs of a community change with the times and with the people who inhabit the area. Success in impoverished and poor neighborhoods often comes in unorthodox and informal efforts. For such a time as this, the Bargain Box Too! store as a compassionate outreach ministry served those living on limited incomes, provided life strategies and job skills for those in drug recovery, and showed compassion to those on the premise that Christ's admonition to clothe our brothers and sisters demands more than just good intentions and old clothes.

For many residents who live in the area, money is scarce, businesses are limited, and personal transportation is sparse. The placement of the Bargain Box Too! in the area allowed the employee to learn, yielded a pleased shopper, and utilized a building in the community. Working with each other and living out the Christian journey was exemplified daily.

Chapter One presents the personal transition the writer made from Chicago as a child to adult involvement in the ministries at Saint Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in Savannah, Georgia, and the contextual analysis of the project as it ministers to a community with increased poverty, hunger, unemployment, and other needs. As a child, the writer was taught principles of Christian discipleship. She never defined wealth in the tangible sense, but in the intangible. She had the love and support of family, which was most important.

Chapter Two gives a historical/biblical account of the church's involvement in God's plan of empowerment and the compassion hermeneutic. The context in which the project took place is described in detail. The city, neighborhood, and the church of the project are described.

Chapter Three presents the theological foundations of the thrift store as they relate to a Christian's relationship to the development of God's plan for empowerment, dignity, and economic empowerment. Liberation theology and the beloved community are a common theme. The call to a particular place in community requires the church to not only hear, but to be in caring relationship with the people of that place. The church in the next decade will have a greater responsibility to the community. Before the church can go into the community to work the mission, the concept of compassionate ministry saturated in the love of God and Jesus Christ must be addressed. Compassionate ministry is humanizing ministry.

Chapter Four presents a description of the method of operation in making the ministry relevant to community residents. The relevance of compassionate ministry and its practice and how the love of God is exhibited through a thrift store are discussed. The chapter also covers a major component of the research process: construction of the survey instrument and the administration of the questionnaire to the shopper and employee in recovery. Why the pro-active method was chosen is also discussed. The data from the survey instrument is gained from two aspects, the shopper and the employee. Specific questions addressed in this research are: how does the placement of a thrift store in the neighborhood help its residents and how does working at a thrift store help a person in drug recovery?

Chapter Five gives an overview of the interaction and practicality of this kind of ministry in an urban area that serves diverse groups of people. It explores the presentation of the survey findings and their relationship to the context of the project. The thrift store was to provide a service to people and for people. It was not to condemn the needs of a

person or speculate about the wealth of a person, but to provide an avenue to shop in an atmosphere of genuine love.

Chapter Six elaborates on the critical need for this ministry as eminent for survival in meeting the economic, spiritual, and social needs of people, and the strengths and weaknesses of the project. Serving people was one goal, but how they were served, why they were served, what changes were ignited, and how they can be encouraged becomes the focus.

In the inner city of Savannah, this writer was privileged to live, work, and worship in a community of Christians who were the inspiration of this project. The group of people encountered demonstrated the power of the gospel in crossing cultural, racial, and financial lines to create genuine Christian community. The Bargain Box Too! is a deeply personal journey of faith, one that moved the writer away from places of comfort and clarity into pioneer territory. The ministry has been a journey of discovery, filled with surprises and rewards that come from trusting God for provision and wisdom. It pushed her to develop her own vision of what the church should be in the world. It is hoped that the reader catches a glimpse of the joy and fulfillment that was experienced in this compassionate model-in-ministry project.

CHAPTER ONE

THE BEGINNING

**It takes strength to remember: it takes another kind to forget.
It takes a hero to do both.**

James Baldwin

The author of this project is an African American woman who has been in ministry for thirteen years. Her decision to accept the call to ministry also meant involvement in ministry full-time. She felt education and training were necessary. Lawyers are expected to go to school and receive training in the discipline of law. Doctors are expected to give years of their life so that they will make a difference medically. People are expected to be trained in the field of their expertise. The same should hold true for those answering the call to ministry.

For a variety of reasons, completion of the Bachelor's degree was a long arduous task. Reflecting on that journey years later, the writer realized that God had been preparing her for the journey ahead. She realized firsthand feelings of inadequacy, fear, uncertainty, and hopelessness. She has persevered, moving ever so slowly and tediously, removing some detrimental lifestyles and replacing them with lifestyle changes that have increased self-esteem and self-confidence levels. Certain words that conveyed negativity were replaced with positive words. The words "cannot" and "will not" were replaced with

Bible phrases of—"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"¹ and "the race is not given to the swift nor to the strong, but to them that persevereth to the end."

Still unsure how God would want to use her in the plan of ministry, but quite sure that theological training was necessary, she applied to United Theological Seminary in Dayton, Ohio. She remembered seeing the school some years earlier on a daily commute to her job in Miamisburg, Ohio, but always wondered what type of organization was nestled in the middle of a neighborhood. Her mind was set. United was the only seminary to which the student applied and, thankfully, she was accepted. In August 1990, after a seven year tenure at Harris Trust and Savings, new life in Dayton, Ohio began with studies in the Master of Christian Education program. Dayton is a city of great diversity. Afraid that her sight would become myopic because of status as a full-time student, each semester she enrolled in a class listed in the African American Ministries program and eventually took all of the classes in this program. She joined the Phillips Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal, (hereafter, C.M.E.) church under the pastorate of Rev. Charles Lee Helton who was elected the 49th Bishop of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in June 1994. A choir director was needed for the children; she always had an affinity with small children and accepted the position. It was a blessing for her to see them grow and get serious about their relationship with God.

The first year of seminary went well, yet the first instincts to be a Christian Educator no longer felt right. The clothing of the program was no longer a comfortable fit. There needed to be more and there needed to be a change. Dr. Samuel D. Proctor in the book, *We Have This Ministry*, states that theological training is crucial, yet it is not an end

¹ Philippians 4:13, KJV

unto itself and must include God in the equation.² The need to communicate the gospel became a priority and there was a switch to the Master of Divinity program with a minor in Christian Education. Matriculation at United left many memories. There were times during those three years when the threat of withdrawal due to lack of finances loomed large, yet God through the mystery of goodness allowed others to always step in at the precise moment when hope was fleeting. On days that the mind played tricks making the author feel it was hopeless, a compassionate person would offer words of encouragement to persevere. United Theological Seminary was only the journey not the destination of what was to come.

After graduation, the return to Chicago unbeknownst to the writer at that time was to be short lived. A native of Chicago, it felt comfortable working in God's kingdom at Carter Temple C.M.E. Church, the church from which the call had been answered. God was about to move her from her comfort zone. Dr. Samuel Proctor speaks on comfort and theology when he says that theology is best understood when it is lived.³ The real living and sharing of God's gospel was about to begin. Wherever there are people, there also lies the opportunity to minister. It was decided in August 1994 at the 3rd Episcopal District Annual Conference in Wisconsin presided by Bishop Dotcy I. Isom, Jr. that a new ministerial assignment for Sheila Daniels Calhoun would be in Savannah, Georgia.

The city of Savannah was roughly 1000 miles from the great metropolis of Chicago and it is located in the south. While this seemed an ending to the long journey in the Midwest through undergraduate school, seminary, and church work, it was really only

² Samuel D. Proctor and Gardner C. Taylor, *We Have This Ministry* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1996), 5.

³ Ibid., 20.

the beginning. Undaunted, sure that God was with her even unto the end, she journeyed to Savannah to begin work in God's kingdom on August 22, 1994. Before going any further, it is necessary to take a step back in time to look at her life up to this appointment.

Within the African American community in the late 1950s and early 1960s, there were many issues. The dawning of the civil rights movement challenging the old status quo was sweeping the land. It was also during this time that the life of Sheila R. Daniels began. She is the first born to father and mother, Leo and Jean Daniels, Jr. who had been playmates in the segregated neighborhood of 43rd Street in Chicago. When deciding on a family, her parents had no idea if they wanted a boy or girl, but they did want a healthy child upon whom they could shower their love. Shortly after their first daughter's birth, eleven months later, another girl was born who was named Cyrenthia. Eleven years later, a third child was born. Proud of the heritage, he was given the name Leo III.

As a toddler, life was lived in a small one-bedroom apartment. At about age three, the writer with her family moved to a larger apartment on Union on the third floor where two and three flat buildings are common in the city. Life as a child was carefree. There was the neighbor's dog, Champ, living quarters with a long hallway, and the little kitchen area in the back. The property owners and neighbors were the Duncans. Then the family moved further south in Chicago into an apartment building that the parents purchased. It was significant for young African American couples to purchase their own property. For the Daniels family, the biological family was important, yet church family was not an issue. As the children grew, the desire to learn, attending school, and education were all stressed, even though no one in the family had completed college. Talk of God and God's relevance for the personal life was not discussed.

The first recollections of hearing about God on a continuous basis were summer visits to the home of Susie Daniels, the writer's paternal great-grandmother in rural Michigan. For whatever the reason, the writer's mother did not think a summer was complete unless a visit to Big Mama's was in the plans. Every summer for three or four years, part of vacation time always meant visiting Big Mama, as she was affectionately called, and Aunt Flora. Because of her mother's wisdom, fond memories of those special weeks in Covert, Michigan remain with the writer. Susie Daniels thought nothing of sharing with others how good the Lord had been to her through the years. She always testified that the Lord was good and would always make a way. Stories were told how you should not do this or that, why you should not cheat, why you should not lie, why you should not mistreat others, and God will punish you if you do not follow His Word, the Bible. There was no dancing, no singing secular songs, and no listening to "those worldly songs on the radio." No music was heard other than an occasional hymn. There were no journeys in the car to the church in town. The summer visits never included church meetings or church outings, but there was always an at-home Sunday school lesson one day of the week, which might or might not include Bible reading. As little girls, the seed was planted that God was someone who just was. His awesomeness was not to be debated nor questioned. God was highly respected and it was hard to comprehend at that time that God, a loving Father, willfully sent his Son Jesus to die on a Cross to save us. Talking about God endlessly seemed to be "something" for old people to do since they did not do much else. At least that is the way this writer felt at that time.

Big Mama's house was the substitute church building in the country, yet in the city the earliest remembrances of being inside a church was Herman Baptist Church—maternally, the family church. As a child, Herman Baptist was viewed as a huge building

that had lots of pews with a man sitting in the middle way up front. In reality, the sanctuary is about ten pews deep with one center aisle and a choir stand that can seat about fifteen persons comfortably. The first recollection of a church service attended at Herman Baptist was “Papa’s” (the writer’s maternal great-grandfather) funeral in 1965. It was the longest service in the mind of a five year old, and it lasted two days. Everyone appeared to sit very stoically, but then two or three persons had to be carried out because they were overcome with what was later explained as grief.

The next visit to the church was with an aunt and cousins. It appeared that this time all the young women were being carried out of the sanctuary. Why this happened was discussed later over dinner. An uncle who was four years older than the writer let us know that the girls had “caught the Holy Ghost.” In the mind of a six year old, this meant something like “catching a cold.” The Holy Ghost did not make you feel well, you had no control and you just had to wait it out. There were no quick fixes. It seemed that this Holy Spirit was quite disruptive. Acutely opposite from this first recollection, it was not until much later in life that true knowledge of the Holy Spirit would be revealed. The writer now knows that the Holy Spirit is a “comforter” and part of the Trinity of God. Moving out of darkness into the marvelous knowledge of who the Holy Spirit is makes the writer cringe when words such as “catch” or “caught” or “uncontrollable” in reference to the Holy Spirit.

Another influential person involved in the crystallization of the writer’s spirituality and feelings regarding God was her maternal grandfather, Eddie Murray. He ran away from his home in Macon, Georgia at an early age, traveled north, and secured a job. In his lifetime, he experienced many hardships—his mother died while he was a toddler, he and his sister were abandoned, and he had little formal education. He, too, always had a way

of sliding into conversations that stressed that God knew all about us, knew about everything. As a youngster, he taught himself how to read and write. He fathered eleven children and was married for more than 40 years until his death in 1975. He was a very stern man, yet he would take all the grandchildren places in his station wagon. He was quick to let anyone know that all the children were his grandchildren and he loved every single one of them. He was addressed as "sir." All responses had to be with, "yes sir" or "no sir," and all grandchildren had to give him a hug on his brisk whiskers whenever they came to visit.

Although Herman was the family church, attendance was only on special occasions or at special times of the year such as Christmas or Easter. The church was not nearby, but the family, immediate and extended, attended when there were special occasions such as family weddings, funerals, or baptisms. In the early 1970s, a special occasion occurred. An uncle who was probably a junior or senior in high school decided to be baptized at Herman. There is no recollection of any conversation about baptism, only that everyone should gather as witnesses. This baptism was a religious "high" for the writer's maternal grandfather. Everyone gathered around the pool, questions were asked of the uncle, words were pronounced by the baptizer, and under water went the uncle. When he emerged from this immersion, Grandfather seemed to speak uncontrollably. What was it that happened to the person baptized that was able to touch Grandfather so much so that he "had" shout and praise God?

Family, as stated previously, was important and the parents were the first teachers, yet conversations about God were scarce or non-existent. Knowledge was often sought from older cousins, two and four years respectively. They too never talked about God, yet they always seemed knowledgeable about everything. They could not, however,

adequately explain this whole Jesus thing. They had heard of God and on Sunday mornings watched the gospel show "Jubilee Showcase" on television, but they too had no religious affiliation with a church or relationship with God.

These questions nagged Sheila for she was not born in the church. There were no great preachers who preceded her with whom she could dialogue about God, the gospel of Christ, salvation, and ministry. She was not privileged to say that church and Christ were all she knew. Church attendance was out of tradition and there was no allegiance or loyalty to any particular church, denomination, or God. As children, prayers were taught to be said on the knees at night before sleep. The subject matter of the prayer could be almost anything. There was a requirement to say something before eating. Overall, Sundays were reserved for outings. A disciplined life set in the church did not happen.

As a small child, when she attended church services, it was with her sister. Time in a specific denomination or church body was not the norm early in life. As a result, there is an empathy or tolerance of other religions. As children, they attended a Lutheran Church for several years, an Episcopalian Church for a brief period, a Baptist Church, two Catholic Churches, an African Methodist Episcopal Church, and now this writer is part of the Christian Methodist Episcopal denomination serving as a fully ordained minister.

She was told by her parents and maternal and paternal grandparents that God loved us and took care of us. Because of that, we should treat people accordingly. Respect of others was also required. Color differences and gender differences were never an issue in the household. There were dark skinned relatives and there were fair skinned relatives, but they all were precious in the sight of God. With these teachings, it was hard to understand the civil rights movement and segregation. Segregation was not yet openly

addressed and it was hard to understand as a child. The love and stability of family was important and very much present.

The residents, politicians, and clergy in Chicago, wrestled with racism, hate, and prejudices. There were marches, raids, fights and burnings. The Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. spoke at St. Brendan Catholic School, the writer's elementary school, in 1967 asking for community support and the need for humanity to come together and live in peace and harmony. He was met with opposition verbally and physically. There are pictures of stones being thrown at him. The area in Chicago that he visited was an area in transition where white flight prevailed. The writer, as a seven year old, remembers hearing the radio accounts over and over of his assassination in April 1968 and wondering why people disliked each other so much. Where was the God who took care of us and loved us? Did living together in peace and harmony mean death?

Specific skin color, race nationality, or gender did not define one as inferior or needy, yet being defined as needy came at an early age, second grade to be exact. A White school adopted the now Black school. During the Christmas season, gifts were sent to the Black school, St. Brendan. While the gesture was "nice," it was distinctly remembered that the idea of being thought of as needy was most uncomfortable. How did this distinction occur? Why did it occur? They were mistaken. All of the necessities of life were at hand. The family consisted of a loving mother and loving father. There were toys and a bicycle for each child. Moving around the city was often in the luxury of an automobile and then there was family. There were aunts, uncles, cousins, grandparents, and great-grandparents who let us know we were special. Afternoons were spent watching television, playing the piano, or jumping double-dutch rope with friends. What more could there be to life? There was a balance of the tangibles and intangibles.

In the summer of 1968, the family moved into their own home farther on the south side of the city. The neighborhood and races were initially separated by railroad tracks. On one side of the tracks, African Americans resided and, on the other side, Whites resided. There was little integration, yet most of what is now recalled of growing up in Chicago during formative years has little to do with racism, prejudice, discrimination, or violence. Discrimination, racism, or any of these subjects was never mentioned in the house. Life was carefree and sheltered. It had been taught that you were a person, regardless of color, race, or class. People were dark, people were light. People were overweight. People were thin.

With the move, came a new school. The students at the new school did not want to embrace the students of color. The new school had all the material things, but something was missing. Each classroom had a piano. There was a playground, yet there was something wrong. Being called a name and wanting to fight because of skin color was a rude awakening to the sheltered world that consisted of family and friends. At the previous school, learning had gone well, but at the new school, a special speech class became part of the curriculum. The younger sister, Cyrenthia, was placed in a class of slower learners. What was missing in this new school? Later, it was realized that the love and nurture that had been an integral part of learning at the other school was not present in this new location.

It was also at this time that the writer's mother started searching for a church home. One Sunday visit led to Arnett Chapel African Methodist Episcopal church. The pastor at that time was Rev. Reid. When the invitation to discipleship was extended, she joined the church. Eventually, her daughters joined and they were baptized.

Arnett Chapel is a small African Methodist Episcopal church that is located in Morgan Park, an African American community on the south side of Chicago. This small church greatly influenced the writer. Arnett helped mold the theology of what it means to be an African American in the United States, elevated the achievements of African Americans, and through love, nurture, and caring showed that God is Alpha and Omega and that Jesus is love. Arnett also on many occasions became a place of refuge. It did not matter what the outside world did or said, Arnett via ministers, teachers, and members instilled that Jesus carried the burden of sin so that life might be lived again, God made each of us special and unique, and family interaction was important. Love and self-worth were stressed repeatedly.

In adulthood, after moving out, the writer decided to start attending church again. The urge to attend was more of a duty than nurturing a relationship with God and being with the body of believers. Having no automobile, the church that she would attend had to be easily accessible by walking. There were three churches in the immediate area. The one she chose was Carter Temple Christian Methodist Episcopal church. Carter Temple had been one of the churches visited when Mother was looking for a church home. After joining a year later, no firm commitment to the life of the church was made. There was no interest in church life after the benediction on Sunday. Then somewhere in the process things changed. To be exact, new life in Christ began in 1988.

A new pastor, Rev. Henry M. Williamson, Sr. was appointed to Carter Temple in August 1986. New programs were implemented. Bible study and Bible reading were encouraged. Everyone was encouraged to participate. The Word seemed to come alive, not necessarily from explanation, but from a desire to know for self what the Bible contained and its implications for eternal life. There was an insatiable thirst that was only

satisfied by reading the Bible. The day job paid the bills, but evenings were spent at the church. The Lord seemed to be calling this writer into ministry, but surely the Lord had the wrong person! The ministry as a profession or career was not in the family, so there was no need to start now. Accepting a call and moving into ministry full-time was the furthest thing from this writer's mind. To discern this call and find an answer for direction, fasting and prayer were incorporated into her lifestyle.

Time was spent as a Children's Bible Study Teacher, the director of the Board of Christian Education, and a faithful Bible Study attendee. Because she worked part-time at the bank, there was time for full participation in the various church activities. The call to ministry became overwhelming, and yielding brought much peace. The Lord won. There has not been one moment of regret. There was never a fear that God could not use a woman, for a woman in ministry was not uncommon. The Assistant Pastor at Arnett was a Godly woman who was well-versed in the Bible and preached the gospel. The Sunday School teacher during Sheila's teen years was ordained in the A.M.E. faith. Negative conversations about women in ministry were scarce. It was always said that God uses whoever is obedient. This rearing coupled with a favorite scripture verse, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"⁴ brought assurance. God keeps proving that with Him all things are possible. Throughout life experiences, God's blessings become more and more evident. She now counts it a privilege to share with others just a little about the Lord. On days when life is overwhelming, the thought of God's goodness brings rejuvenation and renewal. Her parents, grandparents, and others were instrumental in shaping her theology. Their journey also affected her journey.

⁴ Philippians 4:13, KJV

In the early part of the 20th century, African Americans in the nation's second largest city, Chicago, numbered fewer than 45, 000.⁵ The first major influx of southern blacks changed that. By 1920, Chicago had 109,000 African American residents and, by 1930, there were 234,000.⁶ Many of the newcomers were former sharecroppers from Mississippi, Arkansas, Louisiana, and the other states along Highway 51 and the tracks of the Illinois Central Railroad. They were small owner-operators or workers in jobs connected with agriculture. Nearly all were dirt poor. "Many who migrated viewed the journey as divinely inspired deliverance from the land of suffering." From 1920 to the late 1930's, about 444,400 black migrants fled the Deep South.⁷ In that number were the great-grandparents, grandparents, and other family members of the writer.

Her maternal grandfather, the patriarch of the family, in the quest for his family to have a better life, moved from Meridian, Mississippi to Chicago in the 1930s. He believed that Chicago would be the place to provide a better life than the fields of Mississippi. His older brother, Isadore and mother, Susie Scherer Daniels had journeyed earlier to Chicago and lived with family members, Queenie and Joseph Scherer. His mother was the first of his immediate family to leave Mississippi for Chicago, leaving her children in the care of her eldest daughter, Armentha.

In 1938, in pursuit of the better life, Leo Daniels, Sr. left his wife and child in Mississippi while he found housing for them up North. The bus that took him far beyond the borders of Mississippi to Chicago left on a Saturday night. There was expectation and

⁵ Nicholas Leman, *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 68.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

disbelief as this 23-year-old reached Chicago. The ride was not hospitable to people of color and he encountered different problems than in the south. He disembarked from the bus at the bus station at Twelfth Street and Indiana. By his personal account, he walked around looking for work and stayed in various houses until he located his mother and brother. He was reunited with his mother and brother. His wife and newborn child (my father) joined him in Chicago in late 1938. They too had taken the Greyhound Bus.

An entrenchment of Jim Crow, older in the North than in the South, was residential segregation. Those who reached Chicago found something less than the Promised Land. White hostility increased almost proportionally with the surging population. The courts had struck much earlier at housing segregation by law, but the practice continued under the protection of private restrictive covenants written into deeds and agreements. Restrictions were in place as to where the newcomers could live and work. Generally, housing to African Americans was limited to forty blocks on the south Side of the city, stretching south roughly from 12th Street to 39th Street and west from Wentworth to Wabash Avenue.⁸ It was called the black belt, a tightly circumscribed succession of tenements, shacks, and shanties where people of color were forced to reside.⁹

"As migrants from the South crowded into the black belt, landlords converted more and more apartment buildings into kitchenettes to accommodate them."¹⁰ After World War I, Illinois law explicitly outlawed the kinds of racial segregation that southern states often mandated, yet the facts and realities of local life were different.

⁸ Ibid., 62.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., 63.

The causes of Black poverty in the North were fundamentally different from Southern Blacks. African Americans as they migrated owned relatively little productive property. For those who moved North, new conditions of deprivation were encountered. Several downtown hotels and restaurants refused to serve people of color and some theatres cordoned off separate sections for them, often in the balcony. Many entertainers were able to perform at various hotels, but were unable to remain as guests. Healthcare facilities were often poor. The county hospital, Cook County Hospital admitted African American patients, but only hired white nurses, but the “white nurses refused to work with the colored.”¹¹ Nearly 40 percent of the men labored in dead end jobs as porters, servants, waiters, and janitors. Still, this did not deter those who left the South in large numbers.

In 1939, the time came for the entire family to be reunited. Leo, who was not working at the time, became the designated driver to return to Mississippi for the family. In August 1939, he drove to Mississippi, gathered thirteen family members, and drove them to Chicago to his home at 27th and Dearborn. The only items brought from Mississippi were those that could fit in the trunk.

The writer’s maternal and paternal grandparents journeyed from the South to the North in hopes of receiving the gifts of “the Promised Land.” Economically, times were hard. Segregation was in full swing, yet as men and providers of their family, the families of the writer never knew a hungry night. They started their professional careers at the railroad and retired from the automotive industry years later. They migrated from the south, a region where cotton was the main crop and it was the norm to pick cotton in the

¹¹ Ibid., 69.

fiery sun from early morning until dusk surviving the blistering heat. They journeyed from that area where whole families worked the fields, sweating, aching and damaging their hands, backs and knees for life to a place where they felt their lives and conditions would be better. Eddie Murray left the red clay hills of Georgia seeking the new "promised land" in the North. He left the state where one of its natives, Eli Whitney, unknowingly propelled people of color into further bondage and hardship with the birth of the cotton gin.

Savannah boasts itself as a city of firsts; the first capital of the 13th colony and later the first city of Georgia in 1733, the producer of the first gulf in the United States in 1796, the location of the first steamship to cross an ocean in 1819, the city that birthed the cotton gin, the developer of the first motorized fire department in the United States in 1911, and the place of birth of the first Girl Scout troop that was founded by Savannah resident Juliette Gordon Low in 1912.¹² Savannah is also the city of the south that a grandchild of former southern African American men journeyed to a new world in search of the new promised land.

The patriarchs of the family, Eddie Murray, the maternal grandfather, took the train north and Leo Daniels, the paternal grandfather, took the bus north both in search of a new life. As a product of this lifeline, the writer has brought the family full circle. These men migrated away from the South in the early part of the 20th century, and in the later years of the 20th century their granddaughter migrated to the South to serve as a minister in search of a new promised land. In August 1994, the granddaughter, who knew nothing about living in the south other than fragments of life told by her grandparents, flew to

¹² Kenneth Coleman, ed., *A History of Georgia* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1977), 13.

southern Georgia to begin a new life. She became the first to return to the south bearing the scars of injustices that her fore-parents endured. Remembering her ancestors and stories of life in the cotton fields of the south, this journey led to an understanding that included both the black collective experience and family history as they impinge on spiritual and intellectual life.

The move from Chicago, Illinois to Dayton, Ohio, back to Chicago and subsequently to Savannah, Georgia was the beginning of a new world. Sheila was forced out of her comfort zone and pushed to experience God in a whole new way. What she has encountered is not what she expected. Climbing out of conformity can be difficult, but with trust, the journey has been made. The journey made way for inner reflection so that responses could be more objective. It also meant face-to-face encounters with the unknown. This journey, in the words of Ann Lightner, pushed Sheila “to higher heights educationally and deeper depths spiritually.”¹³

There are things in a city that cannot be touched physically, yet touch the lives of residents in a definitive manner. The city makes one painfully aware of the homeless, the destitute, and the economically disadvantaged. It also makes one keenly aware of mission. God has shown this writer that ministry must occur outside the walls of the church and not just on Sundays. Many learning situations have occurred since those first few days in Savannah, Georgia. There have been opportunities to learn, new friendships to develop, and opportunities to do other projects. The foundational desire to see the church as a witness of love, hope, patience, empowerment, mission and compassion through outreach ministry began with this project. The Bargain Box Too! thrift store that serves as a

¹³ Ann Farrar Lightner . . . *And Your Daughters Shall Preach* (St. Louis, MO: Hodale Press, Inc., 1995), 4.

compassionate outreach ministry demonstrates love in action. It also shows the need for Christians to be not only hearers, but doers of the word, as instructed in the Bible.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CONTEXT OF THRIFT STORE MINISTRIES

We were all black and we all poor and we were all right there in place.
For us, the larger community didn't exist.

Barbara Jordan

The essential needs of our most impoverished and broken communities are plainly visible: physical security, access to good schools, access to shopping and jobs, pregnancy prevention, drug and alcohol treatment, and shelters for the homeless or abused. While crime and disorder, failing schools, unemployment, unwed parenting, drug addiction, and mental illnesses have complex and sometimes unknowable causes, there are also clear straightforward ways to rearrange them and reduce their incidence. The most effective organization that can do this is the Church that is willing to step up to the plate and embrace those who have been disinherited. The Church must breathe life into Matthew 5:16, by letting their light shine before others in their good works so that others may see and “glorify God in heaven.”¹ Good works by good workers must be done for God’s children who, at many points in their lives, find that darkness has crept in and prevented them from seeing or experiencing the glory of God. The goal of the Church and its ministries is to increase among people the love of God and neighbor. These objectives are best accomplished through the living out of the Christian life.

¹ Matthew 5:16, KJV

The task at hand is not an easy task, but in the words of Dr. Joel Gregory, “if you effect change in ministry, it takes life to bring life.”² As members of the church, life must be given so that those who no longer live might have life. These are the poor, the oppressed, the disadvantaged, the sick, the hungry, and the destitute. Spiritual needs are not in one place and material needs in another. The two are intricately woven together and the follower of Jesus must share a ministry that presents the gospel at the place where people are in their life. This presentation is achieved through worship which prepares for work and work which is an extension of worship. The two are essentially one.

The Bargain Box Too!, an outreach ministry of the St. Paul C.M.E. church, was started in September 1994 in Savannah, Georgia to effect change in ministry. As an outreach thrift store ministry, The Bargain Box Too! chose to follow the mandate of the Bible by loving and becoming neighborly neighbors, serving willingly, and building the kingdom of God. Three other organizations that have followed this mandate are Goodwill Industries International, the Salvation Army, and the Saint Vincent DePaul Society.

For a little more than a century, Goodwill has been a name known across America and abroad. Goodwill Industries of America was founded in 1902, by a Methodist minister, the Reverend Edgar J. Helms, pastor of Morgan Memorial Chapel in the south end of Boston.³ Rev. Helms was pastoring in an area that had recently experienced a tremendous influx of immigrants who were jobless.⁴ He saw a need for clothing the less

² Joel Gregory, “Where Does the Preacher Stand?” (Sermon preached at First United Methodist Church, Dayton, Ohio during Doctor of Ministry Intensive Seminar, 11-15 August 2003), August 15, 2003.

³ Goodwill Industries of the Coastal Empire, Inc., *Client Handbook* (Savannah, GA: Goodwill Industries of the Coastal Empire, Inc., 1998), 3.

⁴ Ibid.

fortunate and decided to do something. Inspired by compassion for people who were disadvantaged, impoverished, and needy, he sought a way to improve their quality of life. He vowed to help people build self-confidence through work, rather than accept charity.⁵ With the help of his wife, his twelve children, and the congregation, he solicited donations from the community.⁶ Soon, they had more than enough clothing to help those in need.

As the donations grew so did the goals. Reverend Helms visited the wealthier areas of Boston, asking its residents for unwanted clothing and goods. The plan was simple. Clothing and household articles were collected and a workshop was set up in the basement of the church. Poor men and women were hired to work restoring the items, thus learning trades and skills as they worked. Cleaned and repaired articles were offered for sale at very low prices which paid the wages of those who did the work of restoring them.⁷ Goodwill's philosophy was to give anyone who was willing to work, regardless of disability or circumstance, "not charity, but a chance."⁸ This "recycling" of donations through processing, resale, and wages was the beginning of the Goodwill method of self-help and the birth of Goodwill Industries.

Goodwill Industries was formally incorporated in 1902, with rudimentary job-skill training programs operating out of Boston's Morgan Memorial Chapel. Initially named "Morgan Memorial Cooperative Industries and Stores, Inc." the organization later

⁵ Edward H. McKinley, *Marching to Glory, The History of the Salvation Army in the United States, 1880-1992* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 14.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Goodwill Industries, *Client Handbook*, 3.

adopted the name “Goodwill Industries,” a phrase first used by a workshop in Brooklyn, New York.⁹

During the Great Depression, Goodwill Industries, noting a lack of services for people with disabilities, redirected its mission from those unemployed to an undeniably neglected sector, those with disabilities.¹⁰ Although people with disabilities had never been excluded from Goodwill Industries’ programs, they had not previously been the focus of the organization’s efforts. Gradually, a program of employment for handicapped and physically challenged persons emerged. Goodwill is now the largest non-profit provider of employment and training programs for people with disabilities and similar special needs.¹¹ The organization creates jobs by contracting with businesses and the government to provide a wide range of services including janitorial work, packaging and assembly, food service preparation, goods acceptor, and document shredder. Today, Goodwill’s client population includes people with physical, mental, and emotional disabilities, as well as those who face such barriers to employment as illiteracy, advanced age, lack of work experience, or dependence on public support.¹² The ultimate goal is to place individuals in productive employment settings in the community. Due to the increase of Goodwill Industries in foreign countries, Goodwill Industries of America changed its name to Goodwill Industries International in 1994.¹³ There are 187 member organizations

⁹ McKinley, *Marching To Glory*, 18.

¹⁰ Goodwill Industries, *Client Handbook*, 5.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid., 3.

¹³ Ibid.

in the United States and Canada, and 54 associate member organizations in 37 other nations all over the world.¹⁴

Another self-help organization is the Salvation Army. It too has thrift stores across the country. The founder of the Salvation Army, William Booth, was born in Nottingham, England, in 1829.¹⁵ As a young man, he joined the Methodist Church in 1844. In 1862, he left the Methodist denomination to evangelize among the poor in his own way using some of the information he had learned as a Methodist. The Salvation Army, a religious crusade, evolved out of this tradition whose sole purpose was to secure the redemption of lost sinners through faith in the atonement of Christ.¹⁶ General Booth started the East London Christian Mission in 1865; the name was changed to "The Salvation Army" in 1878. In 1880, General William Booth left London to become part of the Salvation Army in the United States. "The Salvation Army in the United States was developed out of courage and compassion and is dedicated to the unselfish commitment to the will and work of God."¹⁷ Its social services are a result of "love for the Lord Jesus Christ" and are exemplified in the motto, "With heart to God, and hand to Man . . ."¹⁸ The Salvation Army recognizes, however, that before some people—those who are hungry, lonely, helpless, frightened, sick or poor, too young or too old for others to care much about—can be told of His grace and love, they must first be given some assurance in practical

¹⁴ Ibid., 5.

¹⁵ McKinley, *Marching To Glory*, xi.

¹⁶ McKinley, *Marching To Glory*, xii.

¹⁷ McKinley, *Marching To Glory*, xi.

¹⁸ Ibid.

form that God and His children love them and will not leave them in want and despair.¹⁹

Simply put, the Salvation Army's ministry is holistic in nature. "It seeks to address the whole person who is a seamless fabric of the physical, emotional, and mental."²⁰

The development of this ministry was wholeheartedly supported by General Booth's wife, Catherine also a minister.²¹ Early on, the Salvation Army embraced women in its ministry and encouraged their participation as ministers and preachers. Its start in the United States was greatly influenced by the work of Lieutenant Eliza Shirley who had left England to join her parents in the states. She held the first meeting of the Salvation Army in America in Philadelphia in 1879.²²

Membership in the Salvation Army grew, but many came to feel that membership in the Salvation Army was only reserved for derelicts, drunks, prostitutes, thieves, gamblers, and those of ill repute. Booth's first congregations were very poor, yet this did not deter him. He preached hope and salvation to them and others, always with the intent to lead them to Christ. Other congregations were not receptive to these converts because of the lifestyles they had led, so Booth encouraged them and set up his own church. He gave these persons direction in both spiritual and practical manners. They developed a band and sang throughout the streets. Many knew the Salvation Army was marching through the streets by hearing the drum roll in the distance. Today, the Salvation Army serves people throughout the United States and in 103 countries.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid., 35.

²¹ Ibid, xxx.

²² Ibid.

The Saint Vincent DePaul Society is another charitable organization. Saint Vincent DePaul was a French priest, 1576 - 1660 who lived in France.²³ He began his work in hospitals for the poor, assisted orphans, and provided shelter for the needy and elderly. DePaul made a pledge to God that he would serve the poor and relinquished his quest for power and prestige. He worked among the people. He lived the gospels and made Jesus his mentor. He was attuned to the gospel scenes by how Jesus encountered, treated, and spoke of needy people. The organization that bears his name was founded in 1833 chiefly by Frederic Ozanam with six classmates at the Sorbonne in Paris to continue his work. The Society is a worldwide Catholic lay organization of men and women of all ages. Its goal is to reach out in the name of Christ to the poor and needy, bear witness to gospel values, and develop spirituality of its members. Today, there are over 4500 active conferences in the United States and about 70,000 active members.²⁴

Thrift stores are common entities across the United States, yet their success is often dependent upon two factors—the quality and cost of goods, and how one is treated during the shopping experience. People know they are poor and do not need outsiders to remind them of this fact. They desire courtesies that will not embarrass or demean them. Although it does not always happen, it is the duty of the Christian to treat others courteously and with compassion. It must be remembered that the ministry of Jesus was often to the poor.

In September 1994, the St. Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in Savannah, Georgia began as an outreach ministry a thrift store, Bargain Box Too!, that

²³ "St. Vincent de Paul," www.sacredheartfla.org/ministries/st_Vincent_de_paul/St_Vincent_de_paul_info.htm, accessed 10/19/03.

²⁴ Ibid.

would serve a basic need for residents in the community and the city of Savannah. The Bargain Box Too! gives people in the area an opportunity to buy secondhand items at a very reduced price, and at the same time help needy people in other areas. Akin to the Salvation Army and Goodwill Industries International, its goal is to lift the human spirit by empowering, express compassion and empathy to people who may or may not be disadvantaged, impoverished or needy, and expand the kingdom of God through love. The store was developed to extend the great need for faith and hope based on Scripture, particularly on an understanding of James 2:8 and Matthew 25:31-46.

After four years in the community, when it was clear that the Bargain Box Too! had survived and would continue, a new ministry within the ministry was initiated. There was a high turnover rate of volunteers and another ministry, the recovery of the drug addict, was evolving. It was proposed that persons enrolled in the drug recovery program at the church would become the main employees and the store would be open six days a week. This writer was there at the ministry's inception and worked to develop a full store that was open daily. Living in the community, the ravages of drug addiction were seen firsthand. This writer feels that when one has the courage to enter where life is experienced, one touches the soul of the community.²⁵ Extending hope to so many whose souls were beaten down became crucial. Participation by each side, the shopper and the employee, yielded blessings.

Cain Hope Felder in the book, *Troubling Biblical Waters* speaks on the praxis shared in the book of Luke. He cautions that activities must be done not in relation to law, but because righteousness is desired. If justice is acknowledged, the justice of God will

²⁵ Henri Nouwen, *The Wounded Healer* (New York: Doubleday, 1979), 73.

acknowledge you.²⁶ No person or group of persons must be condemned or shunned because of status in society, but must be embraced and affirmed in the righteousness of God so that by reciprocating justice, we do unto others as we would have them do unto us. This model-in-ministry project recognizes that the masses will not be changed, but starting with a small group can lead the way to greater change.

The church grows as each part does its work. Church builds itself up in love. Spiritual gifts working together in Christ is an expression of God's love. Some spiritual gifts are spectacular, others are not, but it must be remembered, all gifts are from God, therefore, no person can boast. We should express love for others called to serve and, in Christian maturity, recognize that all is done for God's glory and in His name. It is God's work in us.

The model-of-ministry project that was established centered around three fundamental objectives. First, it was designed as an outreach ministry to provide a needed service in the community which could be utilized by anyone. Second, the store as a compassionate ministry sought to motivate, embrace, and allow recovering drug addicts to acquire skills which would prove worthwhile in future job hunts. Finally, as a financial aid source, the Bargain Box Too! assisted the St. Paul Academy for Boys, another outreach ministry of the church. To know the model of ministry, it is necessary to look at the demographics of the area, the building that houses this ministry, and the church of which it is an outreach ministry. Let the journey begin.

²⁶ Cain Hope Felder, *Troubling Biblical Waters* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990), 23.

A City Of Contrasts

In the state of Georgia, Chatham County was created in 1733 as one of its original counties. On February 12, 1733, the city of Savannah was founded.²⁷ Savannah was to be an economic boon to England. The concept was to send England's poor to this new colony where they would work and ship back a great wealth of silk and other natural materials. The city of Savannah located entirely in Chatham County, lies south of the Savannah River, the boundary between South Carolina and Georgia. The state of Georgia is bordered by Florida on the South, the Atlantic Ocean and South Carolina on the East, Alabama on the West, and Tennessee and North Carolina on the North.

Georgia served as a refuge for European Protestants who suffered injustices at the hand of their overlords. The charter of Georgia also anticipated that the colony would help relieve the problem of unemployment at home by providing unfortunates with a comfortable subsistence in America. The city was one of America's first planned cities, and is the oldest city in Georgia. The system of public squares, laid out by General James Edward Oglethorpe, is now designated a National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark.²⁸

Historic downtown is bordered by the Savannah River on the north, East Broad Street on the east, Park Avenue on the south and Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on the west. This is the site of the Historic District which is 2.5 miles of beautifully restored homes and historic churches, and the area most visitors come to see. It is a place of monuments, shady sidewalks, a cemetery that is a park and a place for fun. River Street

²⁷ Savannah Magazine, *City Guide, The Details of Savannah's History* (Savannah, GA: Savannah Magazine, 1999-2000), 7.

²⁸ Savannah Economic Development Authority, *Site Selector's Manual* (Savannah, GA: photocopied, 1999), 3.

and City Market are here with their stores and restaurants. Physical beauty pervades many areas of this part of the city. Tourism is very active and a large part of Savannah's economy. The Historic Downtown district is recognized as a National Historic Landmark, and in the 2.5 miles of history there are 2,358 historically significant buildings.²⁹ The district is full of wonderful restaurants, unique cafes with outdoor dining, coffee houses, tearooms, art galleries, museums, beautiful old churches and antique shops. Home prices in the district vary from \$195,000 renovated carriage house with interior columns and hardwood floors to \$1.5 million.³⁰ Other less expensive homes and condominiums in varying degrees of disrepair are available for \$98,000-150,000.³¹

The climate of Savannah is classified as semi-tropical. Average seasonal temperatures are 51 degrees in winter, 66 degrees in spring, 88 degrees in summer and 68 degrees in autumn.³² The summers are sticky and the city on average experiences about sixty-seven days when the temperature is higher than 90 degrees. Being on the southeastern coast, hurricanes threaten the city each year. The hurricane season runs from June 1 through November 30. Winters are fairly mild. Temperatures rarely go below freezing for more than 30 days a year.³³ Because of such ideal temperatures, tourism is a big commodity in Savannah.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 7.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce, *Economic Trends 1999*, Photocopied, 5.

³³ Ibid., 6.

According to the 1999 statistics from the Savannah Area Chamber of Commerce, visitors spent \$680 million dollars and accounted for 18,000 jobs in the local economy.³⁴ There has been an upsurge in hotel building and expansion, a blossoming of new restaurants and specialty shops and a proliferation of tour companies. Also, more than 1200 jobs were created in the manufacturing industry and \$140.5 million was invested in new facilities, expansions and improvements to infrastructure.³⁵ The downtown area is the home of the city's financial district, Johnson Square, which is ringed by the main offices of several banks.

Downtown Savannah paints a picture of a serene tranquil city. From the banks of the Savannah River southward, the city grows into mile after mile of people. While the initial perception of the outer perimeter portrays a promising economy for the majority, delving deeper into its center reveals a lifestyle for many that is heartbreaking and indicative of many cities across the country. Bordering the Historic District, one mile south of downtown, the Victorian District also known as the Thomas Streetcar District yields a stark contrast to what is seen by downtown visitors.

Comparing itself to the great metropolis of downtown Savannah, the Thomas Streetcar District is a neighborhood that was once a dense and intricate weave of private homes, but now is in decay. Visually connected to both city and river, grand homes shared common ground with more modest family dwellings of large two story homes. There were pharmacies and grocers, churches and schools, all of which thrived through a long period of the community's history, before beginning to yield to the great American move to the

³⁴ Ibid., 6.

³⁵ Savannah Magazine, *City Guide*, 20.

south side. It is common throughout the United States that people move farther from the city to escape what is perceived to be the ravages of urban life. During the early 70s, many of the neighborhoods of Savannah started to show signs of decay because of white flight which left many empty buildings, empty lots, and businesses in trouble.

The section of the Thomas Streetcar Historic District, also known as the Victorian District, examined in this project is Bull Street to the east, Martin Luther King known as MLK to the west, 37th Street to the south and Park Avenue to the north. In looking at a community, it is important to be aware of the demographics culturally, physically, spiritually, and educationally. Informed decisions can realistically be made regarding the services in the community if the composition of the community is known. It is important to know the socioeconomic status of the population, specifically income, because it is one of the predictors of spending habits. Knowledge of the income level of residents is vital to a full understanding of the economics of the community.

According to Socio-Economic and Land Use Data for January 1999, the census information for the city of Savannah with a total population of 141,060 is 56.1% non white, 47.0% male and 53.0% female.³⁶ The per dwelling income is \$43,141. Less than 5% are without private transportation.³⁷ More than 50% are employed.³⁸

In contrast, according to the statistics in census tract 01800 for the community immediately surrounding the area of this project, there is a total population of 1,188 persons with 710 of them employed, or more than 40% unemployed, and a dwelling

³⁶ Chatham County-Savannah Metropolitan Planning Commission, *Socio-Economic and Land Use Data, Chatham Urban Transportation Study* (Savannah, GA, January 1999), By Municipality, 2.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ See Appendix N.

density of 7.92 persons per household.³⁹ There are 510 persons enrolled in school or almost 43% of the population which means that finances coming into the neighborhood are scarce. The racial composition of residents is 98.3% non-white, 45.9% male, 54.1% female, and almost half, 49.2%, are 20-64 years old.⁴⁰ The number of persons who have no automobile is 194, almost 20%; 234 persons have at least one automobile in their household.⁴¹ There are 597 dwellings in the area with more than one hundred vacant. The vacancy rate is almost 20%. The per capita income is \$7,737 with a per dwelling income of \$18,682.⁴²

This District is one of the most impoverished areas of the city. As poverty increases, so does the use of programs designed to help the poor. Despite the fact that benefits are being reduced nationwide, 13.6% of the total population received food stamps.⁴³ Seventeen percent of the population in Chatham County that is part of Savannah utilized Medicaid, whereas for the state it was 12.8%, and each month 3.2% participated in the WIC (Women, Infants, and Children) program. Of the 13.6% who received food stamps, 87% of residents in the area of 32nd Barnard Street receive some type of governmental assistance.⁴⁴ Economically, in Chatham County, 17% of all residents are below poverty level, and of this 17%, 72% are African American, and 26% are White. Of

³⁹ Chatham County, By Census Tract, 4.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Mercer University School of Medicine, Partners for Community Health, A Partnership of The Chatham County Health Department and The United Way of the Coastal Empire, *Chatham County Community Health Profile 1994* (Savannah: privately printed, 1994), iv.

⁴⁴ Ibid., v.

the 17% below poverty level, 17% are age 65 and older, and more than 39% are female heads of the household.⁴⁵ A study in the area by the Second Harvest Food Bank revealed that more than 75% of the families surveyed had children who ate all of their meals in the feeding programs at their schools and did not have a meal after lunch until the following morning.⁴⁶

According to the Savannah Health Department, the residents in the zip code area of 31401 which encompasses the project target area have the highest incidence of reported HIV positive cases. There is also a high homeless rate and high mental illness rate in the community.⁴⁷ Poverty does not confine itself to any particular age, sex or race and its consequences can be felt in every area of the community. Many households are deemed at the poverty level. By definition, a household is made up of one or more persons living in a housing unit. There are more female-headed households, fewer children live with both parents, and more persons live with others in unrelated households.

The need for the church to be available to the residents in the community is great. The thrust must be from theology to ministry. The study of God must be discarded to actually become the workers of God.⁴⁸

According to Franz Fanon in *The Wretched of the Earth*, the more people understand, the more watchful they become, and the more they come to realize that finally

⁴⁵ Ibid., v.

⁴⁶ America's Second Harvest Foodbank, Savannah, GA, 1993 survey.

⁴⁷ Savannah Health Department, "HIV/AIDS Statistics" (Savannah, GA, photocopied, 1999), 2.

⁴⁸ Gerald Schlabach, *And Who Is My Neighbor* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1990), 44.

everything depends on them and their salvation lies in their own cohesion, in the true understanding of their interests, and in knowing who their enemies are.⁴⁹

In The Beginning

Believing that a community of believers must exhibit the fruit of the spirit of joy, longsuffering, and helps, the idea came from the pastor, the Rev. Henry R. Delaney, Jr. that a thrift store in the neighborhood would be beneficial. It was this vision of the pastor that became a reality and the first major assignment of the writer. Equipped with seminary knowledge, northern urban living knowledge, and a zeal to share in the vineyard, plans to open a thrift store were put into place.

At this writing, there are fifteen faith congregations within a three block radius surrounding the Bargain Box Too! The congregations are made up of Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists, African Methodists, Full Gospel, Greek Orthodox Christians, and several Protestant denominations. Within the area, there is the main public library, the area police precinct, a school for continuing education, and two elementary schools.

The Bargain Box Too! opened in the community in September 1994. The first workers were volunteers from the community and the church. The building is located in an area that has experienced high crime, high poverty, high homelessness, and high single parent homes. The core group consisted of eighteen volunteers ranging from ages fifteen to sixty-five who were members of the church. New volunteers were welcomed from the Seventh-Day Adventist denomination and the Roman Catholic denomination. The core group of shoppers were residents in the community. The name was derived from a similar store in Hilton Head, South Carolina which had no affiliation with the church, and the

⁴⁹ Frantz Fannon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (New York: Wiedenfeld Press, 1963), 125.

name served as a testimony to the number of active ministries being carried out in the community by St. Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

Initially, the pastor was the best advertisement for the new ministry. He was a great encourager. Every Sunday, he solicited donations from the congregation. Having no retail experience, the writer as the new shopkeeper felt somewhat apprehensive, "If nobody comes and nobody donates anything, then we will just forget about the Bargain Box, Too! and he will, too." That did not happen. Every day in some way the Bargain Box Too! was mentioned. Time was set aside to venture to the newly acquired building located at 1601 Bull Street.

The building, over one hundred years old, is the former Hermes-Gottlieb's Bakery. The corner store building located at the intersection of Bull Street and 32nd Street is the only remaining store of a shopping center of years ago.⁵⁰ The building, built in 1897, is a two-story wood framed building which has had several additions and alterations over the years. The shopping center housed the Lewishon-Schwartz's Grocery Store with an attached bar, a millinery shop called Mrs. Dempsey's, a shoe repair shop, a confectionery and fruit store, and a pressing club.⁵¹ There was a barber shop, a horse stable, and livery.⁵² African Americans who lived south of the city in Coffee Bluff were allowed to sell vegetables and seafood they had caught from the river.⁵³ Over the years, the demand for particular services changed and eventually the building became a deli for community

⁵⁰ United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, *National Register of Historic Places—Thomas Square Streetcar Historic District* (Savannah, Chatham County, Georgia, August 20, 1997), 6.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid., 7.

residents. In the late 19th century, as a result of the electrification of the streetcar lines, the A & B Belt Line in the area enhanced the development of the neighborhood from a white working class to a middle class neighborhood.⁵⁴ The trolley lines were removed in 1920 on Whitaker Street, one block west of Bull Street as the automobile became the dominant mode of transportation.⁵⁵ The Savannah Public Library, built in 1915, received \$75,000 from the Carnegie Foundation for its construction and was designed by Hyman Witcover.⁵⁶ During the 1920s and 1930s, construction slowly declined as the neighborhood became full and there was little land left for development.⁵⁷ In the mid-1930s, Gottlieb's Bakery was the only store that remained.

Following World War II, the neighborhood began to decline as residents left the neighborhood to relocate in newly formed suburbs away from the city. As those residents left their houses, lower-income residents moved into the Thomas Streetcar neighborhood. With the white flight of the 1970s, the neighborhood entered a major transition. Rather than live in the neighborhood with African Americans, many families moved from these homes leaving them empty.⁵⁸ The Gottlieb's Bakery remained and served the community until it closed and the building was sold to St. Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in 1994 by third generation Gottliebs. Today, the neighborhood is slowly experiencing re-gentrification and many empty buildings are being refurbished.

⁵⁴ Ibid., 13.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁵⁶ Ibid., 7.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 17.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 18.

Introduction To The Model And Context

At its inception, The Bargain Box Too! was a big empty room that was part of a big building. To make it more appealing, the floor and walls were painted with leftover paint from a previous project. The previous building owners had left various items throughout the building. With the exception of two persons, none of the volunteers, context associates or shopkeeper (the writer) had been in retail before. With imaginations and ideas stimulated, the building was explored to see what items might be located to enhance the store. A big wooden red counter, some bags, an old adding machine, and wooden risers were located. The risers were covered with red paper and used as clothing tables. The entrance was off the side street so the check-out station was set up near the door. Each afternoon, a crew of children, young people, middle aged women, retired people and working people donated their time to get things in order for the grand opening. Some helpers came for an hour, some for three or four hours, but everyone supported the endeavor and helped in some way. Each day began and ended in prayer that the Lord would send shoppers and volunteers. The London Fog coat factory donated some new coats which were seconds for this new endeavor. Other donations started arriving. Items were sorted, racks were put in place, and clothes were folded. The weather had been sunny and water leaks were not a concern, but one afternoon it started raining. The ceiling leaked in one spot and the group moved. The ceiling leaked in the new spot. The group moved again. The water started coming in from the floor around one of the downspouts. The telephone was not working, so work was halted for the day.

Most of the workers thought this meant that opening day seven days away would be pushed back. The church maintenance workers, two women, were notified and they

checked the roof to see if it could be repaired. The Sunday following the water incident, which was not mentioned to the congregation, the pastor told the people to look for the grand opening! "You can get shirts for \$1.00, dresses for \$2.00, and a whole lot of other GOOD stuff, so come on down this Friday and check us out."

Work resumed on Monday and there were no leaks. Several more members came to help. There were now sixteen workers. A price list was developed. A flyer was distributed in the community by the youth. This writer went to the nearby library to read material on thrift stores and garage sales.⁵⁹ A work schedule was formulated from the volunteer sheet. The staff, consisting of the writer and volunteers, decided that the store would be open three days a week at different times, thus hoping to give everyone the opportunity to shop. Donations were steadily coming, but some of the donated items went straight to the dumpster. Initially, sorting was the biggest task. The goal was to provide for sale usable merchandise that was in good condition. Also, the store and its operation was new and thus not equipped to repair and mend items. Donations continued to come and volunteers continued to work.

Friday arrived and a new ministry of St. Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal church was birthed. At the opening ceremony, a prayer was said, there was a ribbon cutting ceremony, and punch and cookies were served. The day was successful. The store was open from 5:00 P.M. until 8:00 P.M. The receipt totals for the day were six-hundred dollars and thirty-five cents. The second day netted over four-hundred dollars.

The Bargain Box Too! continued to be open, but as time went on, volunteers were unable to give their support on an on-going basis. Sales were down and the store was not

⁵⁹ See Appendix A.

open on a consistent basis. Coupled with a desire to keep this ministry active, help others, work in God's vineyard, and link the ministries of the church, this model-in-ministry project vision evolved from the writer.

The model-in-ministry project demonstrates an outreach ministry that fills the social issues of community residents and interacts positively with residents who enroll in the drug recovery program at St. Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal church. Its aim is to develop and implement programs necessary for the person in recovery's own spiritual, social, mental and physical development as they perceive their needs, rather than depending solely on someone else to lead and guide them. St. Paul has several outreach ministries. In addition to the drug recovery program; there are several feeding ministries, a television broadcast of the services, an ice cream parlor, and a school for boys.

The drug recovery ministries are the Hallelujah House for Men and the Chestina House for Women.⁶⁰ The Hallelujah House was started in June 1994 and the Chestina House (formerly the Zechariah House) was opened in March 1995. The facilities provide room and board to men and women who are in drug recovery. The residents are required to participate in the WFAL program, (Working for a Living) during their first thirty days of residency.

Just as poverty is no respecter of race, age, or religion, the same holds true for drugs. Drug and substance abuse have reached staggering proportions in many African American communities. It has affected families, communities, and society in every form and fashion. The drug culture has dictated a need for churches to become more involved in the life of its members and the community. Many who go through recovery programs lack

⁶⁰ See Appendix E.

self-esteem and have minimal job skills. The project was designed to empower persons who think their situation is hopeless, help them identify and use their gifts and talents for future jobs, and express the love of God through a church based thrift store.

The Bargain Box Too! also provides financial support to the St. Paul Academy for Boys. The Academy was opened in September 1993 to insure specifically the survival of African American males, but is open to all boys desiring a quality education. The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, nationality or ethnic origin in its admission policies. The yearly tuition is \$2200 for primary grades and \$2500 for middle school and high school. More than sixty percent of the students receive financial assistance. The Academy provides education to boys in grades two through twelve, boys who deserve more, but have been labeled as undesirables by society. The school motto is, "Let Us Make Man" based on Genesis 1:26b. The primary focus of the institution is to promote leadership and provide education that will give future men the opportunity to be productive citizens socially, morally, and economically.⁶¹

Finally, the project aims to provide ministry through the sale of clothes and small appliances at a reasonable price to local residents who, because of transportation, finances, discrimination, or whatever reasons, do not venture out of the neighborhood boundaries. While the store targets neighborhood residents, it is open to everyone. Initially, there was a proposal to look at the thrift store purely as a ministry of economic empowerment, but it was realized that the kingdom of God as neighbors based on Matthew 25 should be followed.

⁶¹ See Appendix M

The model utilized a questionnaire that was issued to Bargain Box Too! shoppers over a three month period. They were asked to evaluate their shopping experience based on a pre-determined set of questions. Each community has its own needs, and those who work in them understand those needs better than anyone else. As previously stated, the economic condition where the model-in-ministry project took place is heart wrenching. Poverty is high, illiteracy is high, and unemployment is high. Drug dealers stand on one corner and prostitutes comb the area. It would appear that there is no future or hope for this area. However, this is not the case.

The ministerial foundation for the Bargain Box Too! comes from the church of Saint Paul Episcopal Church that is located two blocks west of the thrift store. Saint Paul is making a difference in the community. The church understands the needs of the community and is addressing them through its various ministries.

Saint Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal Church

On the corner of 32nd and Barnard Street (pronounced Bar-nerd) in Savannah, Georgia sits a large red building that is serving as a beacon in the community. It is Saint Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal Church known as “the house of prayer on Barnard Street.” People from all walks of life come to Saint Paul. The present edifice was purchased in 1964; however, the sanctuary was never filled in regular worship, and was open to the community for singing programs when it would then be filled. Since that time the Lord has allowed the sanctuary to be filled on a regular basis as the people of God come to worship the Lord.

The church under Pastor Delaney’s leadership has mushroomed from a membership of 216 to more than 4000 members and, at this writing has the largest

membership in the denomination. Saint Paul has a diversified membership that embraces the destitute, the alcoholic, the recovering substance abuser, the wayward mother, the rejected child, the hurting grandmother, and that unforgiven father. The membership is also composed of doctors, lawyers, tax collectors, tax payers, everyday folk, the disadvantaged, the discouraged, and the encouraged. City aldermen, judges, and television personalities also attend. It is a church that conveys, "In order to really know God, we must love each other and help each other." A key factor contributing to the growth of Saint Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal church is the belief that the Church must embrace Jesus' mission, identify societal problems, and deliver solutions holistically—spiritually, economically, educationally, socially and culturally.

Saint Paul is located in an ever-changing community. It is a testimony to see the person that used to guard the corner for drugs now coming to church and working in the vineyard of the Lord. It is a church whose goal is to glorify God, lift the name of Jesus, and help hurting people. It is open all day every day. The doors are unlocked each weekday from 10:00 A.M. until 9:00 P.M., and on weekends from 9:00 A.M. until 6:00 P.M. On Sunday, the doors are opened at 7:00 A.M. and remain open until the end of the last service of the day which is usually about 7:00 P.M. The church has experienced valley and peak seasons, but each season was a preparation of what was to come. Given the context and the large number of problems in the community, the church decided on several approaches to tackle various aspects of the conditions facing the residents. These solution-oriented ministries include more than 30 active ministries.

The church was formally organized in 1871, one year after the official birth of the denomination and maintains a sense of history for which the community is proud. The members who established Saint Paul Colored Methodist Episcopal Church had been a part

of Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, South. In October 1871, Saint Paul C.M.E. Church - Savannah, Georgia was independently established and the Reverend Lucius H. Holsey, who later became one of the leading bishops in the C.M.E. church, was appointed as the first pastor. Through the years, Saint Paul has been blessed by the pastorate of many ministers. Each minister brought and gave a part of their life to a church that has been shaped into what it is today.

Structurally, the edifice is an eclectic design, with Romanesque influences seen in its rounded arch forms, and Basilican influences noted in the two-tiered roof line with its clerestory windows. Small paired windows of stained glass are set into archways along the front and sides of the windows. The arched and gabled entrance stands directly under a great rose window with intricate detailing.⁶²

Inside, the sanctuary's burgundy padded pews are offset by white walls and dark wainscot. Memorial windows along the sides are comprised of rectangular stained glass panels of blue, cream, and green. The altar area features heavy carved molding. The balcony, a horseshoe gallery with multi-level seating spans the interior. High on the front wall is a baptismal pool that is used for baptizing each second Sunday evening. A grand piano and Hammond organ occupy the right corner of the sanctuary.

As stated previously, the church building was purchased May 26, 1964 from the Calvary Baptist Church for \$150,000 with a seating capacity of 1148 persons under the direction of Bishop Randolph P. Shy and the pastor, the Reverend John L. Hightower.⁶³ The purchase included the former Calvary Baptist Temple building, a Social Hall with an

⁶² Rita F. Spitler, *Higher Ground* (Savannah, GA: T-Square Graphics, 1995), 58-59.

⁶³ St. Paul C.M.E. Church, Official Souvenir Program, *Formal Opening Celebration St. Paul C.M.E. Church* (Savannah, GA: St. Paul C.M.E. Church, 1964), 9.

indoor basketball court, eight apartment houses and two lots.⁶⁴ White flight that was so prevalent across many cities in the 1960s included entire church memberships. Calvary Baptist was no exception. This area of the city on 32nd street was referred to by a city historian as the “seat of racism.”⁶⁵ Rather than worship together with people of color, the congregation took flight to the southside of the city on newly developed land. They vacated the building before selling it. When St. Paul finalized its purchase the building had been empty for almost a year. The formal opening celebration of the property as a C.M.E. Church was held on Sunday, August 30, 1964. Bishop P. Randolph Shy, prelate of the Sixth Episcopal District and Bishop E. P. Murchison, prelate of the Fifth Episcopal District were present at the event. The mortgage of this edifice was retired April 25, 1982.⁶⁶

Christian Methodist Episcopal Church History

Saint Paul is part of the Methodist faith that was formed in December 1870. When the General Conferences of 1866 and 1870 of the Methodist Episcopal Church South were held, they completed their plans for the organization of their Negro membership into an independent church to be known as “Colored Methodist Episcopal Church.”⁶⁷

The time appointed by the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church South to hold the first General Conference for its Negro members was December 15, 1870. Bishop Paine and Bishop McTyre of the Methodist Episcopal Church South

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Dr. W. W. Law, interview with author, March 1999.

⁶⁶ Moses Calhoun, interview with author, 18 January 1999.

⁶⁷Othal H. Lakey, *The History of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church* (Memphis, TN: CME Press, 1985), 15.

presided over this first General Conference, and consecrated its first two Bishops: Bishop W. H. Miles and Bishop R. H. Vanderhost. On December 16, 1870, forty-one Black men, many of them former slaves, gathered at the First Methodist Episcopal Church, South of Jackson, Tennessee. They came from South Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Texas, Arkansas, South Carolina, as well as Tennessee. Their purpose was to organize their own separate and independent church.⁶⁸

The establishment and development of this denomination was not easy. The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church began in 1870 as the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America. Within 50 years, the Church dropped “in America.” It was the youngest of the African American denominations formed. From 1870 to 1954, the Colored Methodist Episcopal Church in America struggled with who it was, where it wanted to go and how it was going to achieve its charted course. Within 85 years of its residency in the United States, the Church decided that it could stand on its own and took the bold stance that it could no longer tolerate the name given by its fore parents. In May 1954 the name was changed to the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church which was to include people of all colors and nationalities. The Christian Methodist Episcopal Church moved from infancy into adulthood shaking those issues that sought to destroy it. Slavery had engulfed the land, emancipation followed and the Colored Methodist Church was birthed. Discrimination was rampant, yet the church survived. Political unrest moved into the church, yet she held her ground. Racial equality was pushed and the Church held its ground to be inclusive.

⁶⁸ Ibid., 15.

In the early 20th century, Bishop C. H. Phillips of the C.M.E. Church described his beloved Church in the following manner,

The C.M.E. Church has made a history that sparkles like diamonds and shines like the sun. She is young, vigorous, progressive. There are no wrinkles on her brow, and the crown she wears, is for a queen. She has been keeping house for herself, and has had no occasion to regret her loneliness. Ever since I was old enough to know right from wrong, I have been nestling in her bosom. The bed upon which she has laid for me is decked with coverings of tapestry, carved works, and fine linen.⁶⁹

Almost a century later, this description easily describes the Saint Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal church in Savannah, Georgia. It, too, still shines but it is doing so in a decaying neighborhood. Most blocks surrounding the building contain abandoned and empty houses. The cost of living in this area is one of the lowest in the city. It is difficult for many homeowners to secure insurance for their property, while others pay some of the highest premiums in the city. Drug dealers loiter on the corner and women unashamed to display their bodies parade the street as prostitutes. Churches in various cities across the country are realizing that they cannot isolate themselves from the blight of their communities.

Undeterred by what “appears” hopeless, Saint Paul is making a difference. The church has moved out from the physical structure of the building and into the community offering salvation and hope to all those who will hear via its ministries. It has moved out strongly on the journey of renewal because it has a holistic vision of mission. It is a holistic scope of mission based on the Bible that has at least five major components: evangelism, Christian nurture, Christian stewardship, meeting human needs and speaking prophetically.

⁶⁹ Bishop C. H. Phillips, *History of the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church* (Memphis, TN: CME Press, 1975), 131.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS OF NEIGHBORLY NEIGHBORS

There are two ways of exerting one's strength;
one is putting down the other is pulling up.

Booker T. Washington

The call to a particular place in community requires the church to not only hear, but to be in caring relationship with the people of that place. Primary to the church's identity is its role as neighbor. The first impressions of neighbors are not by investigation, but by conversations. Our conversations are not marked by requesting data for problem solving, but by inviting others to experience the terrain of our heart and inviting others to live out God's love. The church in the next decade will have a greater responsibility to the community. Before the church can go into the community to work the mission, the concept of ministry, specifically compassionate ministry must be addressed. Compassionate ministry must respond to situations of discrimination, oppression, suffering and liberation. The levels of compassionate ministry that will be addressed are empathy, empowerment, love, and empowerment.

The message in Luke 10:30-35 reinforces the ministry of the church. The key to understanding outreach ministry is the role Jesus played as practical deliverer of the oppressed and for us now to bring the oppressed into a new community in which they can experience wholeness and fullness. The church must recognize oppression and not fall prey to becoming the oppressor. "The ministry of the church embraces not only its own

process of being liberated, but its participation in the liberation of others.”¹ So often in mission, rather than addressing human needs of persons as significant beings with feelings, a diagnosis of a systemic problem is made with suggested solutions. Work is started on how to eradicate the problem, but the voice of the person is never heard. This is not true mission, but charity at its worst and oppression in its truest form. “Creative charity is difficult for churches who decide to get on the compassionate ministry bandwagon and so throw compassionate ministry into the ecclesiastical mix as an interesting side show.”² Too often, there is little vision, commitment, solidarity, vulnerability, theology or imagination involved in such endeavors.

Our Mission And The Church’s Mission

The mission of the Church however, must be willing to evangelize, nurture, meet human needs, and provide Christian discipleship and stewardship. This must be implemented from a mission mind set, not a maintenance mind-set. The church with a maintenance mind-set is usually most concerned with the structural part of the edifice and maintaining the status quo. Much time is spent on what is needed and how it is going to be done versus why it is needed. This is not the case in a mission-minded church. The mission-minded church embodies all. The mission-minded church is concerned with tasks like feeding the poor, clothing the naked, and caring for the oppressed. Most of all, attention is focused on God and His action in the world.

There are many who do not know God, but we are all God’s children, made in his image. There are those who know God, but suffer because of poor choices. God’s face and

¹ Bryan P. Stone, *Compassionate Ministry* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1996), 103.

² Ibid., 106.

the face of the poor are one and the same. It is the face of those who are sick with HIV/AIDS, those who are mentally ill, the welfare recipient, the homeless, those who are addicted to drugs and other detrimental forces, and the despondent person. When dealing with the many faces of God, there is a face-to-face encounter. It must be understood that whatever deems a person poor by societal terms, their dignity must not be ignored. They are faces with feelings and expectations and the Church must understand that they are not dealing with a faceless blob of distressed humanity. Jesus understood this. Walter Malone in, *From Holy Power to Holy Profits* writes:

In the inauguration message that Jesus delivered at the beginning of his ministry, he emphatically stated he had an agenda for the oppressed. Jesus Christ was a social activist whose ministry of liberation was designed to minister to the total person.³

Jesus addressed the oppressed and the downtrodden. The church must do the same. The church must have compassion

Poverty

Poverty has many faces, yet “the economically poor and the spiritually impoverished have the same basic need—to know that their welfare is God’s concern.⁴ Our love for God must not be by words, but by actions. We must be willing to know the poor. In the words of Mother Teresa, we must be willing to live and “serve the poorest of the poor.”⁵ Throughout her life she spoke on loving not only the poor, but loving one

³ Walter Malone, Jr. *From Holy Power to Holy Profits* (Chicago, IL: African American Images, 1994), 17.

⁴ Michael Christensen, *City Streets, City People* (Nashville TN: Abingdon Press, 1988), 36.

⁵ Renzo Allegri, *Teresa of the Poor: The Story of Her Life* (Ann Arbor, MI: Servant Publications, 1996), 69.

another. In the book, *Mother Teresa: Love Stays*, she says, “being unwanted is the greatest disease of all.”⁶ As she saw it, the worst sickness isn’t hunger or tuberculosis, but the feeling of being unwanted. The only medicine for this is authentic devotion based on love. The book of James speaks on the welfare of the poor and the abuses of the rich. He repudiates all forms of discrimination and clearly states the type of person that discriminates. James 1:22-25 admonishes,

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.⁷

Merely hearing what should be done is not enough. Being doers of the word is a step toward liberation, but charity in the right praxis is important. Response to a human need is not simply authentic. Just because one writes a check to their favorite philanthropic organization each month or shows up once a year to carry out a good deed does not mean that true compassion has been exhibited. Jesus was born in a lowly manger in Bethlehem. He was not born in the Roman Empire. His parents were poor. He dwelt among humanity never asking for compensation. His ministry was most evident in mingling with the common folk. Our recognition in ministry as Christians and compassionate persons “alongside the poor and the suffering is not simply for their benefit or for their liberation,” it is for us also. Jesus’ earthly ministry was not in a dictator’s role, but in that of a servant. Jesus loved everyone, but had a special affinity for the poor. He

⁶ Christian Feldman, *Mother Teresa: Love Stays* (New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1998), 95.

⁷ James 1:22-25, KJV

lived a compassionate life and, in several pericopes of scripture, Christians are told to do the same. Christologically, Jesus' life is not some coincidence, but revelation that he had total empathy for the poor. Compassionate living is not a series of good deeds, but rather a participation in God's boundless compassion in and through Jesus.

Ministry

In the book entitled, *In the Name of Jesus*, Richard Nouwen discusses ministry noting that ministry is not an individual affair.⁸ He elaborates on the point that training does not guarantee that one is equipped. Ministry is not only a communal experience; it is also a mutual experience. Nouwen counsels that the mystery of ministry is that we have been chosen to make our own limited and very conditional love the gateway for the unlimited and unconditional love of God. Therefore, true ministry must be mutual.⁹ In essence, the inner self must be linked to God through Jesus Christ so that the outer self can show others that the Balm in Gilead is available to all who seek him. In looking at the poor, we must always first see Jesus. Philippians 2:3-5 tells us to "let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind, let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."¹⁰ In order to share God's transforming love, the Church and each member are obligated to work for God's justice in the world. Following Christ means declaring redemption of the world through Christ, learning of and sharing the good news of God's love which has no bounds, and working to

⁸ Henri Nouwen, *In the Name of Jesus* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 44.

⁹ Ibid., 44.

¹⁰ Philippians 2:3-5 KJV

bring God's kingdom to reality through efforts to eliminate hunger, to care for the homeless, to gain justice for the mistreated and to gain freedom for the oppressed. This is God's love at its highest and compassion in its greatest form.

As stated in the introduction, "the word 'compassion' originally comes from the two Latin roots, *cum* meaning "with" and *pati* meaning "to suffer"—thus, "to suffer with."¹¹ The concept is that one side, one organization, one person enters into the hurt and suffering of another person who is hurting with true feeling and solidarity. To be compassionate to others, therefore, is to be there with them, to hurt with them, and to feel with them. Compassion is much more than a general benevolence or pleasant disposition. According to Salvadoran priest Jon Sobrino, compassion is to "internalize the suffering of others."¹² Compassion requires us to be led where we would not want to go. This is a simple but difficult vocation, yet when we are faithful we can become compassionate "fools of Jesus Christ."¹³

It should be noted that bringing God's kingdom to reality also means recognizing the differences in suffering. "There is a vast difference between suffering that is related to issues of fulfillment in our lives and suffering that is related to issues of pure survival."¹⁴

It must be recognized that compassion cannot be learned, is not a skill that gives degrees, and is not mastered through years of training. It is not a human quality that can be acquired, but a divine gift that must be shared. If there is any discipline of compassion it

¹¹ Stone, *Compassionate Ministry*, xi.

¹² *Ibid.*, xii.

¹³ Henri J. M Nouwen, *Compassion* (Dayton, Ohio: United Theological Seminary, 1970), TC 511 audiocassette.

¹⁴ Stone, *Compassionate Ministry*, xiii.

can only be understood and made visible by loving God and loving thy neighbor and by love serve one another. When compassion is practiced, it brings us closer to God and the realization of the compassion of Jesus Christ.

Reconciliation is at the heart of this. Jesus said that the essence of compassion could be summed up in two inseparable commandments: love God and love thy neighbor. First, Christian community development is concerned with reconciling people to God and bringing them into a church fellowship where they can be discipled in their faith. Our love for Christ has the potential to break down every racial, ethnic, or economic barrier. As Christians come together to solve the problems of their community, the great challenge is to partner and witness together across these barriers. Christian community development recognizes that the task of loving each other, respecting each other and communicating with each other is core. To make clearer what is meant by a compassionate outreach ministry, it is necessary to discuss empathy.

According to Arthur Ciaramicoli in *The Power In Empathy*, empathy means to “suffer or experience in.”¹⁵ Using an example of mixing oil and water versus mixing water and milk he makes the distinction between sympathy and empathy. In the case of the oil and water, which is referred to as sympathy, they stand next to each other, touching and interacting, but always maintaining their separate identities—analogously, two people are together in their separate experiences. Empathy is synonymous with the water and milk that will mix and intermingle. Sympathy allows us to suffer with people without ever getting close to them. Empathy on the other hand knows its heart is full with the understanding that one cannot immediately know what is being felt because of

¹⁵ Arthur Ciaramicoli and Katherine Ketcham, *The Power of Empathy* (New York: Dutton Books, 2000), 80.

individuality, yet has the capacity to understand and respond to the unique experiences of another. Empathy is the bond that connects us, helps us to think before we act, and motivates us to reach out to someone in pain.¹⁶ Empathy allows us to work together while at the same time reminding us that no one is perfect, and that in relationships we can find and experience hope.¹⁷ “Hope like all experiences powered by empathy is not a passive state of waiting for something good to happen but an active pursuit of goodness.”¹⁸ By increasing our awareness of other people’s thoughts and feelings, empathy shows us how to live the life fully and wholeheartedly. Empathy is primarily interested in that process of becoming, enlarging, and expanding for in truth that what empathy is—an expansion of your life into the lives of others, the act of putting your ear to another person’s soul and listening intently to its urgent whisperings. Empathy, when used constructively for benevolent purposes, can mend relationships and heal deep, long-standing rifts between people. It refuses to allow words of despair or hopelessness. Empathy can build bridges of understanding, soothe tensions, and at the same time lead to a deeper understanding of the self. “Reaching out to others, we participate in the most meaningful experiences of life—gratitude, tolerance, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, and love.”¹⁹

All people should have access to the basic human needs of food, shelter, clothing and education. This belief in the intrinsic nobility of every person is something that was not taught daily to the writer, but lived every day by her parents. Whether her parents

¹⁶ Ibid., 10.

¹⁷ Ibid., 225.

¹⁸ Ibid., 228.

¹⁹ Ibid., 11.

were talking to a political official, a janitor, or a teacher, they treated them all exactly the same. Strict religious ideas were not part of her rearing, but neither parent spoke disapprovingly of religion, and as adults the children were free to find their own beliefs. There was unconditional love and the full understanding that the children would always be loved served as important parts of the family structure, not material successes. The maintenance of dignity was taught no matter what the situation in life. This teaching spilled over into the development of the Bargain Box Too!, an outreach ministry of Saint Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal Church.

Outreach ministry according to Roy Nabors “does not separate the individual from his or her community.”²⁰ Outreach ministry is best realized when the two are intricately woven together. Outreach ministry has the propensity to challenge the status quo. In some deeply impoverished neighborhoods, long after the experts from business, the mainstream foundations, and nonprofits, even government have thrown up their hands in despair and regret, the church remains. To the surprise of many, particularly some of these same experts, the churches are making a difference in the outreach ministry programs. They are quietly and matter-of-factly mending the social fabric, one person at a time, saving lives that were thought to be lost. It is done based on a powerful sense of who they are and what they are about, a respect for the transformative power of belief in God and a remarkable capacity for selflessness and love in Jesus’ name. The compassionate outreach ministry of The Bargain Box Too! gives people in the area an opportunity to buy good items at a very reduced price and at the same time help needy people.

²⁰ Roy Booker Nabors, “How to Increase Financial Support for Outreach Ministry in African-American Churches” (D.Min. thesis, United Theological Seminary, 1996), 31.

Meeting the immediate needs of the community is a primary concern, which tends to be closely attuned to the concerns and priorities of the people served. Working within the community makes the church highly sensitive to what can and cannot be achieved. Outreach ministry in the community serves residents and the workers are fully invested in its success. The workers consist of leaders who are servants and servants who are leaders.

A church=s neighborhood is the living word of God which to be understood requires sensitive and persistent exegesis. It is vital to the stability of the community and church that congregations know their neighborhoods; they must learn how to exegete their context. Exegesis is the interpretation of the content. The congregation cannot be narrow-minded and unfocused. Narrowly focused organizations working in poor neighborhoods simply do not have the inclination or the need to constantly develop new ideas in order to serve their constituents. This is not the case with the outreach ministries of Saint Paul Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. They are not reinventing the wheel, but looking at what is present and building on this foundation.

CHAPTER FOUR

METHODOLOGY—PROACTIVE RESEARCH

Service is the rent you pay for room on this earth.

Shirley Chisholm

St. Paul is doing the work that God calls the faith community to do. Christians learn what faith is all about from countless daily encounters with Christianity: formal and informal, and planned and unplanned. This understanding of faith, disseminated by the church and assimilated by its members in their daily lives, is identified as embedded theology.

Previously stated, the Bargain Box Too! is an outreach ministry of St. Paul CME Church. This research project proposes to examine the love of God to lift the human spirit through a thrift store. This is achieved from two aspects, the shopper and the employee. A number of questions are addressed in this research, including, how does the placement of a thrift store in the neighborhood help its residents and how does working at a thrift store help a person in drug recovery?

These questions did not just happen spontaneously. They were influenced by the writer, the contextual associates' input, the contextual analysis of the neighborhood, and the literature about thrift stores, compassion, love, empathy, human need and suffering, and drug addiction and recovery. They resulted after this writer began thinking about

linking two ministries, examining what issues were important, and determining how those issues might be measured.

The project was designed to provide those in drug recovery with life skills that will help them in future job endeavors. It was also designed to empower residents within the community by providing a thrift store for shopping for goods at reasonable prices. It required the writer to consider various concepts and definitions and various avenues to explore so that bonding could take place with the people of the church, the community, and the addict.

The collected data for this study was from two groups, recovering drug addicts who served as employees, and shoppers in the store. Each group was examined separately. Those recovering from substance abuse were residents of the Chestina House and the Hallelujah House, outreach ministries of St. Paul. They were required to report to the church for the first thirty days of their stay for work assignments. Within a three-month period, nine persons reported to the Bargain Box Too! It was anticipated that those who worked would gain job skills that could be used in another job setting, and personal issues such as self-esteem, self-confidence, and self-pride would be bolstered.

The other group was the shoppers. The shoppers lived in the neighborhood and shopping at the Bargain Box Too! meant they were supporting a business in the neighborhood. The Bargain Box Too! not only served the community, but also in its implementation developed a business plan for future ministries of this type. The Bargain Box Too! encountered many persons informally and had the opportunity to live out love.

The United Theological Seminary Doctor of Ministry project mandates that there be participation of the context associates with the candidate. These persons in the local context are referred to as context associates. The purpose of this mandate is to allow

persons in the local church, in this case St. Paul C.M.E., the opportunity to assist the leader in the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of the project. The people who were involved in the Bargain Box Too! operation, including the leader, had little experience in business or management, yet there was a sincere desire to work with people. Ideas from other fields were borrowed. What had been done in other jobs if thought beneficial was incorporated. The task to provide the best service in the most efficient manner became a priority. The context associates were aware that the sales and shopping at the Bargain Box Too! since its opening in 1994 had decreased. Many of the original volunteers had secured paying jobs and could no longer volunteer in the afternoons, while others had other obligations that prevented consistent commitment. Seven persons, all church members, two men and five women made commitments to work as context associates in the ministry model. Four of the associates resided in the immediate neighborhood, while three others lived nearby. Two of the associates were retired. One contextual associate had four children, was working part-time, and greatly appreciated a thrift store. One associate was a recovered drug addict. Another person was a lifelong member of Saint Paul who agreed to help as needed. There was one person who was a former owner of antique store, and finally, a woman who had migrated to Savannah from Mississippi.

From verbal responses and verbal inquiries, it appeared that a thrift store would be beneficial in the community; however, the sales were showing something different. After much discussion, this writer along with contextual associates agreed that some changes would have to be made to ensure the survival of the Bargain Box Too! and provide ministry to others.

First, it was decided that the store should be open every day instead of three days in the afternoons. It was felt that shoppers would be more responsive knowing that the store was open consistently rather than trying to guess or remember which days and times they could shop. To keep overhead costs at a minimum, the Bargain Box Too! with the exception of a manager would continue to be staffed solely by volunteers and merchandise would continue to be received strictly as donations.

Second, the directors of the two recovery houses agreed that the in-house residents would be required to work at the Bargain Box Too! for at least thirty days before seeking outside employment. One of the context associates designed an information sheet requesting personal, but general, information about the workers such as name, address, telephone numbers, and any special medications. Each person was also given information about the Bargain Box Too! such as the address, telephone number, and an emergency contact.

Scheduling is one of the key factors in the successful operation of a business. Scheduling was left up to the directors of the recovery programs; however, the workers were personally told by the writer and the directors that they were a vital part of the ministry. The church member who is part of the Bargain Box Too! team serves as volunteer support to the person in recovery as that person moves towards becoming a productive person in society. The program in essence becomes an interfaith ministry that combats substance abuse. Similar to the One Church-One Addict program founded by Father Clements a Roman Catholic priest, members of St. Paul were seeking to mobilize the community and the residents of the Houses by forming faith bridges spanning the gap between poverty and the insanity of addiction and the soundness of healthy growth.

Addiction is a spiritual disease and healing takes place through spiritual caring. The ministry's purposes relate to recovery through compassionate living. The minister and congregants must actualize love, and each addict must know without a single doubt that at this place he/she is loved.

The road of faith is traveled to recovery. The road begins in struggle by the addict and the church's ministry. There is an emotional roller coaster journey, yet it ends in praise to God. It must never be forgotten that each person is an individual with a personal problem, looking for the same results, sobriety and peace. There are different personalities from different backgrounds having shared the same hurts, but reaching their goals in different time frames. Compassion, love, and humbleness ends the road. Reaching out into the drug culture for most C.M.E. members and ministers or any minister for that matter is a process of reaching into the unknown. There exists a different class, different life styles, different morals, different character building systems, and different sets of circumstances that lead a person to the Hallelujah House or the Chestina House.

Persons who come into the drug recovery program are asked to make a commitment to four life changes by (1) embracing a new, drug-free environment where old relationships and familiar temptations are minimized, (2) redirect their energies and replace negative behaviors with positive behaviors, (3) find a place in a faith community, knowing that kicking the habit cannot be done alone and one cannot make it alone, and (4) commit to a daily devotion program. The daily menu of biblical teaching, prayer meeting and Christian fellowship will lead to a successful program for the individual.

It was recognized that on-going sobriety is not a fast process. Relapse is often part of recovery, but taking it slow and day-by-day can lead to opportunities to grow mentally, physically, and spiritually. If these opportunities change or are avoided, recovery will be

slower.¹ Many problems in the lives of people which hinder recovery revolve around their not knowing love. Several of the context associates and other church members committed to adopting a person in recovery.

Finally, it was decided that the answers to the research questions would be achieved by feedback from the customer clientele. The design for the model-in-ministry and how the feedback would occur were examined. Different modes of analysis were examined, and the pro-active research method was chosen to collect and sort data. This method of research engages in qualitative research while working toward transformation.

The pro-active research method does more than just describe or understand a phenomenon, it seeks to stand with the person in the phenomenon, even as the phenomenon and the persons involved experience the process of transformation. The pro-active researcher, therefore, intentionally and actively engages in the experience that is being researched.²

An additional noteworthy point about the pro-active research method is that the researcher's personal journal becomes a main part of the data gathering process.

Data is gathered from not only the participants and the setting, but also honors subjective material generated by the researcher. Because the researcher's generation of subjective is also valued, the personal journal of the researcher often becomes central to the data gathering process, primarily because pro-active research places high priority on naming and monitoring such personal factors in an effort to ground and make theory more explicit. Regardless of the complex of research tools chosen by the researcher, however, theory is interactive, emerging not before the period of research, but in conjunction with it.³

¹ Christensen, *Samaritan's Imperative*, 143.

² William R. Myers, *Research in Ministry* (Chicago, IL: Exploration Press, 1993), 31-32.

³ Ibid., 30.

A twenty question survey form was developed and distributed to shoppers as they prepared to conclude their shopping experience.⁴ They would be asked to complete the form while they were still in the store. The goal was to develop a questionnaire that would not take a long time to complete. The questions asked about the store, the shopping experience, demographics, and place of residence. No questions about finances were asked because that data was supplied by the census tract data provided by the socio-economic and land use data information. The age of the shopper was not of great importance. There were two “throw-away” questions⁵ which were general questions that were added to allow a brief change in focus. They were added as incidental questions that were relevant, but not important information being examined in the project.

The Bargain Box Too! thrift store was open to everyone where anyone could shop and feel sincerity. The shoppers were met where they are in this life journey. The same was true for those in drug recovery. It was hoped that everyone would see sincerity and feel love and at some point visit the church during a worship service. Brochures about the church services and the boys school were placed at the check-out counter.

The questionnaire was distributed in two one-week intervals of each month, the first full week of each month and the last full week of each month over a four-month period from February through May of 1999. These weeks were chosen because at the end of the month in many households, finances are scarce and at the beginning of the month it is just the opposite. The shopper questionnaire was distributed in the store rather than

⁴ See Appendix K.

⁵ Bruce L. Berg, *Research Methods for the Social Sciences* (Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon, 1998), 66.

being mailed into the community. In addition to the previously stated questions, the survey for shoppers sought to answer the following questions:

Does a clothing thrift store in the community have an impact on its residents?

How can a thrift store best serve the community?

The volunteer survey for the person in drug recovery sought to discover more personal information and the value of the work experience. The advantage of this type of sampling survey is that it offered an opportunity to reveal characteristics of the community by studying individuals who represent the community in a relatively unbiased manner.

At the end of the thirty days, each person in recovery who had participated at the Bargain Box was asked to fill out a survey form. It was stressed by this writer that the answers on the form would in no way compromise or jeopardize their enrollment in the respective programs, The Hallelujah House for men and The Chestina House for women.⁶

The author kept a journal, noting situations that were love in action.⁷ There were those who came when the store was not officially open and not included in the survey, but had an impact on this writer.

There were additional volunteers and workers who were available during store hours, so they chose to help sort and fold items. Two people would sort on the floor and two persons would sort in the back area tagging. Some days there were more than two people in each spot. In sorting clothes, throwaways and storage were determined.

Once the model-in-ministry project was put into place, informal meetings were held every two weeks to look at the progress of the ministry model. At this time, the

⁶ See Appendix E.

⁷ See Appendix P.

questionnaires were read and a special lunch was ordered for the workers. Three teens were recruited who canvassed the neighborhood passing out flyers every two weeks, at the beginning of the month and at the end of the month. They were asked to come the day after the bi-monthly meeting. Pickup of appliances and other goods was scheduled.

In administering the survey, it was stressed that the interviewees were benefiting others. Employees realized that having an abiding faith in the goodness of other people is a blessing and helping others is not a service, but rather, a privilege. Humility is at the core of this privilege. Each person has gifts and graces and God can use all of them. Each person must discover their gifts and build upon them. All persons can minister to each other and the world, but not all will do it the same way. Whether a person's gifts are preaching in a congregation, repairing shoes, working in retail, making people feel better by talking to them, or parenting, all are vital to the creation of God's kingdom. No one knows for sure what act of kindness or extra effort may change another's life. God calls each person to minister in the way most suitable for that person. No gift used wisely is less valuable in God's eyes. Only a refusal to recognize and use one's gifts is sinful. Everyone was in some way able to participate in the operation of the Bargain Box Too!

Ministry in this context was new for all involved. Reading material provided some pointers, but first hand experience proved to be the best resource. Recognizing that everyone was needed and could be involved became crucial. Reflecting on James 1:22-25 that tells us we should be more than hearers of the Word, this project consisted of doers of the Word and not just hearers. The doers were responsible for making this a successful ministry. The doers feel a strong and clear connection with other people. No collection of data was requested from donors because continuous donations attested to the support of the ministry.

The following is a summary of the key elements of the design of a thrift store.

Development and Design

- Write up a Business Plan how will goals best be achieved
- Select a name for the thrift store and register it with appropriate authorities
- Check what taxes must be paid and what licenses are needed
- Look at the demographics of the area for a proposed thrift store and the demographics of the city
- Determine your target group
- Determine expenses such as rent, utilities, supplies, and salaries
- Determine needed equipment
- Determine cost and types of marketing strategies
- Arrange store that creates a pleasant atmosphere and not a cluttered look
- Ideally a rest area for workers should be provided—this area can have a coffee maker, small television, radio, microwave, and table and chairs

Daily Operations of a Thrift Store

Opening Procedures

- Open building
- Count cash-on-hand and zero out cash register, ideally no more than \$75.00 on hand at a time
- Check the area making sure everything is in order
- Open store to customers

Closing Procedures

- Count drawer—subtract closing cash from the starting cash to get amount earned for the day. Be sure to list the date and each amount.
- Check that all appliances are off, no running water, all windows closed and doors locked

Floor Procedures

- Assist customers as needed
- Check that items are properly tagged, pull those that are not
- Place items in specifically chosen locations
- Keep store in neat condition

Donations

- Determine how donations will be accepted—i.e. daily, particular days, drop box, etc.
- If items will be picked up by store, schedule a convenient pick-up day and time
- Decide how unusable donations will be discarded

Backroom Procedures

- Check items—clean, dirty, broken, unusable, etc.
- Sort items—appliances, clothing, jewelry, etc.
- Use clean and neat items—some appliances may need to be cleaned with spray cleaner such as 409
- Tag and price items—color coded worked best for us
- Place items to be put on the floor on marked racks—i.e., children, men, women, etc.

Employee Supervision

- Each volunteer and employee should complete a information sheet that includes name, address, telephone number, special medical needs, and emergency contact. This should be updated once a year.
- Provide each worker with the name, address, telephone number of the store and the manager's name.
- Schedules should set two weeks at a time. Be sure that volunteers know that they are a vital part of the organization.
- It may work best if those in drug recovery do not handle any large amounts of money or directed to steer sales to a designated person.
- At least once a year give all workers a written appreciation

Forms

- Develop a contribution sheet that is available to donor at time donation is made. This cuts down on stamps and envelopes
- If proceeds from sales are donated to a specific organization, a short information sheet about that information should be readily available
- Update forms yearly

CHAPTER FIVE

FIELD EXPERIENCE IN COMPASSIONATE MINISTRY

Opportunities for ministry are as varied as the believers themselves.

The Bargain Box Too! was highly supported by the community in the generous donations received. Local churches, local organizations, and individuals donated a tremendous amount of merchandise. On several occasions calls were received from organizations that wanted to donate the residuals of hard to sell items from their own thrift sales. Calling us eliminated a long and tedious clean-up process on the part of the seller. If requested, the Bargain Box Too! picked up items, providing our own transportation.

Although not intended, welcome relationships with other service agencies developed. Caseworkers, social workers, and parole officers would call to see if their clients could receive clothing assistance. In some instances, it was for a person recently released from prison returning to society in only the outfit in which they were released. In other instances, a new mother may lack resources to buy clothing for her newborn child. Caseworker and client are met at the store in the early morning before opening to the public to allow them to shop alone. Although payment for goods is expected, there are some cases of dire need and this policy is set aside. When necessary, anything in the store is available without charge. This is after all a Christian thrift shop. Picking up on customers' special needs, the manager and this writer sometimes put aside scarce items for particular individuals. The manner in which the items are offered, reflecting genuine

interest and respect, forestalls embarrassment. It is the dualism between the material and the spiritual that made the project important.¹ Along with being doers with genuine compassion, empathy also emerged. It was realized as this project progressed that every human attempt to be compassionate independent of Christ was doomed to failure.² God's compassion is the source of all human compassion and our compassion is nothing more than living out agape love. All compassion should be dependent on God's compassion in Jesus. In Christ, we can carry the burden of whole world, but His burden is light.³ Once this was realized, the work was not so much about what we could handle, but a manifestation of the great compassion that God has shown to the world in his son Jesus.

Many businesses and organizations that help the needy are, by necessity, located in distressed neighborhoods where buildings and homes are in poor repair, commercial activity is limited, and trouble of various kinds is commonplace on the street. Residents are not always treated courteously and sometimes receive substandard goods in the neighborhood stores. Bargain Box Too! was not part of that statistic. Clothes were checked before they were put on the floor. The Bargain Box Too! offered some immediate residents of the area an escape from life on the streets. People were allowed to come in and shop in ease. No one followed them around as if they were going to steal something. Assistance was offered as needed or requested. A designated play area was set up for children while their guardian or parent shopped, yet both, child and adult could see each other while they were in the store. Teens and children were allowed to browse the

¹ Stone, *Compassionate Ministry*, 107.

² Nouwen, *Compassion*, audiocassette.

³ Ibid.

store without feeling the stigma or stereotype that they were there to steal something because they were teens.

Setting up the schedules had to include at least two breaks. Many of the workers were smokers and an extra break had to be included for cigarette breaks.

When the thrift store opened, there was only one other business in the area. Five years later, there are five businesses in the area. There is a barbershop and beauty salon to the east, a realty office is located on the southeast corner, an appliance store is on the northeast corner, and an ice cream parlor is in the front part of the building that houses Bargain Box Too! There is a Catholic church to the south, a police station is a block and a half north, and the Narcotics Division of the Police Department is located on the southwest corner on the other side of the building. New businesses in the area have increased shoppers in the neighborhood and have helped stabilize the neighborhood.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

SHOPPERS

The overall responses from the survey forms indicated there was a need for this ministry and that it was a valuable resource in the community. Relationships with other businesses were fostered, valuable learning tools for operating a store were realized, and as an outreach ministry, the beloved community was realized. The Bargain Box Too! was operated in love and respect. People of all ages, races and faiths learned to work together and build together. The ravages of poverty still exist, but at the Bargain Box shoppers felt warmth. Donations were received continuously throughout the year. Thank you letters were mailed on an on-going basis. Tax-deductible letters were mailed. Bulk furniture pick

up service was implemented. The constant footwork of passing out flyers and advertising the store became a priority.

The surveys were distributed in two-week intervals, the first full week of each month and the last full week of each month over a four-month period from February through May of 1999. Each month the number of responses varied.

The average response over the four months was eighty-two per month. Seventy-six persons completed the survey the first month. Eighty-one completed the survey the second month. Eighty-nine persons completed the survey in the third month, and eighty-three completed responses were received in the fourth month. The slight drop in numbers was because many people were repeat customers and part of the survey was not counted in the totals. Overall, this was a high number of responses for a thrift store. On some days, there might be three customers for the entire day while on other days there might be as many as twenty-five shoppers on a given day. The average year round temperature in Savannah is between 65 and 70 degrees. The mild weather makes it ideal for people to venture out and shop.

The rate of responses and degree to which the survey instruments were completed in full was considerably higher when they were read to the person being interviewed. Illiteracy and homelessness is high in this context of ministry, so very often instead of asking people to fill out the survey on their own, it was read to them by the staff or manager. Certain groups such as the homeless are difficult to reach by any other method than personal interviews. The goal was to acquire answers without creating any awkward or embarrassing situations for the shopper. Care was taken in reading the questions and not making any verbal statements, responses or comments regarding the question. The majority of the people were willing to answer the questions when they were told it was for

a school project and not for statistical purposes to gauge the need for a compassionate outreach ministry. In their own way, they extended compassion by being honest and willing to answer the questions presented. They felt their answers would increase the probability of a good grade for this writer because of their input. In their own way, they were sharing and giving of themselves. Compassion was not a romantic idea that created disillusionment, but a service fulfilled.

In the words of Henri Nouwen, “the discipline of compassion is voluntary displacement.”⁴ In order to help someone else, the comfort zone is removed. This is very important for without voluntary displacement, solidarity with the oppressed, poor and down trodden “quickly decays a smoothly run social agency where everything is understood except how it feels to poor, oppressed, and downtrodden.”⁵ Voluntary displacement is a discipline that our vocation is more important than our career. Removing self was essential to a positive outcome. The religious person displaces himself/herself and does so not to be special or praised, but to reveal to people of being human with feelings, needs, wants and desires.

The data in all instances indicated that the Bargain Box Too was a viable ministry that was welcome in the community. The data was consistent throughout. The months studied were February, March, April and May. There were some questions that had no responses. The majority of the responses for zip codes were in the same zip code zone as the Bargain Box Too! The largest number of customers was on Tuesdays after Bible Study.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

The total number of survey responses were:

- February seventy-six responses
- March eighty-one responses
- April eighty-nine responses
- May eighty-three responses

The average number for responses was 82. The number of people who responded was ninety-nine percent. This high percentage is probably due to the way the questionnaires were distributed. In all instances, there was someone ready to receive the completed form. Pens and pencils were readily available and given to the interviewee with the paper. In some responses, a reason was given for the response.

The results have been listed in the order the questions were asked.

Overwhelmingly, the response was the store saved the shopper money. Ninety-one percent said yes, five percent said no and a little more than four percent were unsure. The question was a yes or no response, however 15 responses wrote unsure. Several persons said they had never thought about the store saving money, but thought about a store with a good price for goods that was nearby. Still two other responses were they had not saved money because they would spend any leftover money on something else.

“Did you like the selection of clothing?” was the least answered question. Again, the question was a yes or no response. Two hundred and ninety-five responses were made which means that thirty-four responses were left blank. Why this happened is uncertain. Repeat shoppers would lead to the assumption that the selection of clothing is satisfactory, however, the high number of non-responses might be a reason to investigate. Seventy-six percent said they liked the selection of the clothing, fourteen percent said no they did not like the selection and ten percent did not respond.

Ninety percent of those who responded said this was not the first visit to the store. One percent said they could not remember and nine percent said this was their first visit to the store.

The response to shopping here again was inversely proportional to first time shoppers. Ninety percent said they would shop again at the Bargain Box Too!. One percent or fifteen responses said they were visitors to the city and probably would not shop at the Bargain Box Too! again. Nine percent said they might or might not come again to shop depending upon their transportation.

Ninety-two percent said they would recommend this store to someone else. The seven percent who would not recommend the store to someone else said this for a variety of reasons. Three responses were visitors and two responses said they knew no one

The majority of the responses said it was a pleasant shopping experience.

This question was a crucial question for the survey. Seventy-five percent of the respondents said they lived in the neighborhood. One significant discovery was that five percent of those who completed the survey worked in the neighborhood and from the results of a later question; fourteen percent of the respondents lived in a nearby neighborhood from the zip code indicator.

Eighty-five percent indicated the store hours were convenient. One percent indicated they would like to see evening hours at least one day a week. One percent indicated they would like to see earlier hours at least one day a week.

This was a crucial question to see if marketing strategies were working. Again, this was a yes or no response, yet it was noted that one percent of the responders did not know what the dollar bag day was. Ninety-six percent said they liked the dollar bag day. Four percent indicated that they would not like to see the dollar bag day more often if it

was not on a specified day, and/or advertised before it happened. This feedback helped in determining when the bag day should be implemented.

Interestingly, eighty-eight percent responded that they were the female head of the household. Five percent were not head of the household and seven percent of the men responded that they were the head of the household. This was a fill-in question which was inserted for statistical purposes. Being the head of the household had no bearing on the need for a thrift store in the neighborhood.

Sixty-eight percent of the respondents said they were disabled, retired or unemployed. Two percent made no markings.

Four percent indicated they were students.

The responses for question thirteen were varied. Twenty one percent indicated they first learned about the Bargain Box Too! from the church. They were members of Saint Paul. Twenty percent indicated they first learned about the Bargain Box Too! from a flyer distributed in the neighborhood. Nineteen percent said they first learned about the thrift store from the radio on the gospel radio station. Another nineteen percent said they saw the building as they passed by, and eighteen percent said a family member told them about the store. In both cases, less than one percent indicated that the television and eavesdropping on someone else's conversation in the grocery store was responsible for them learning about the Bargain Box Too!

Of all the responses, the location of the store was the chief reason marked. The price of the goods was next highest choice. The selection of merchandise was in third place, friendly helpful staff was next and other was last. Some of the responses for "some other reason" were: recommendation of caseworker, visiting, waiting for someone who is shopping, and doing repair work in the church across the street.

The location of the store did not necessarily mean the responder was a neighborhood resident. Zip code responses determined this. Location might be because the store was located off a busy street, near downtown, near the bus stop or near a place of employment. It was reassuring however that the highest percentage of responses was the location of the store.

All the items that were listed, household appliances, furniture, electronics, sporting goods, adult clothing, toys, toddler clothing, jewelry, and tools were circled. Since Bargain Box Too! was already selling these items, it was decided that what the customer wanted was available.

The majority of the responses were four to six years. This response was one percent higher than one to three years. Fifteen percent said they did not live in the community.

Thirty percent of the respondents shop for their children the most at Bargain Box Too! Twenty-three percent of the responses shop for self and grandchildren respectively. Eleven percent shop for other family member. Six percent shopped for their parents, a little over four percent shop for their spouse, and three percent shop for their friends while in the Bargain Box Too!

Everyone did not respond to this question. There were three hundred and twenty-two responses out of three hundred and twenty-six. Thirty-nine percent said they use public transportation the most. Twenty-three percent said they use their own car for transportation. Close behind the car owners, twenty-one percent said they walk. Twelve percent said they use a bicycle as their mode of transportation, while five percent said they depended upon a friend for transportation.

The majority of the respondents listed 31401 as their zip code. This suggested that most of the shoppers were from the community. Thirty percent of shoppers listed 31415 as the zip code of their residence. This area is right next to the 31401 zip code area.

Each church has its own calling. Each ministry has its own purpose. Each community has its own needs. It is when the church responds to a call with ministry to community needs that lives can be touched and spirits can be changed. The data in all instances showed that the Bargain Box Too! was a viable ministry in the neighborhood.

WORKERS' SURVEY

The survey was titled for graduates, because being sober and drug free for many persons is a great accomplishment and should be commended. It also bolstered the self-esteem of the workers when they saw that they had completed a phase in the recovery program. They were often encouraged to complete the full thirty days. They were told once this happened no one could ever take that away from them. They had achieved something and should feel proud.

Even though it was written on the bottom of the questionnaire, they were told that filling out the form would not jeopardize their enrollment in the drug recovery programs. The questions were worded not to intimidate but to encourage. It was discovered that two of the workers could not read. It was suggested that they sign up for the continuing education program at Richard Arnold located three blocks from the Bargain Box Too! They agreed.

There were nine responses from the graduates. The two persons who could not read were not ridiculed, but someone read the questions to them and told them that their answers would make a difference. It was a humbling experience to read to persons who

were the same age as the writer. They were comfortable enough to ask questions about unfamiliar words.

Six of the nine persons or sixty-six percent said they did not know they had worked in retail. They had to be told what retail industry meant.

Three persons or thirty-three percent said they had worked in retail before.

All nine responses said the experience at the Bargain Box Too! had increased their self-esteem. One person said it had been a long time since they had stuck to a task for thirty days. Another response was they felt loved and accepted unconditionally. One person did not want to comment. One response said she liked being able to shop for clothes freely.

Four responses said they had recommended the Bargain Box Too! to their friends, and three persons indicated they had told their family members about the thrift store.

All nine responded that the experience had a positive influence on them. They felt like continuing in life, and three persons set new goals for themselves.

Of the nine responses, no one indicated that they were highly satisfied with their life. Four of the nine responses said they were ok with their life at this time. One responded that they were dissatisfied with their life at this point in time. One person indicated they were unsure about their level of satisfaction. One response indicated that the general level of satisfaction with life was bad, and two persons said they were satisfied.

Six responses indicated they thought they could use skills learned from their time at the Bargain Box Too! One response was no because they wanted to pursue another job. One response initially said no, but then changed his answer when he remembered the encouraging talks about being punctual to job assignments.

One hundred percent of the responses said the job setting had helped them spiritually. The overall consensus was that, as workers, they felt like a viable part of the thrift store ministry. They were able to give to others instead of having to always be the receiver. One person said they now understood the concept of being a blessing to someone else when that had been a foreign concept. Two persons said that they realized that God still blesses even when we feel it is undeserved. Another response relayed that they felt that nothing was too hard to achieve with God in the plan.

CHAPTER SIX

REFLECTIONS/SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION: THE END IS THE BEGINNING

When we struggle with both the painful and joyful realities of life—sometimes a frightening risk—we meet Jesus. This encounter can change our lives forever; it can provide meaning that long outlives what the author of the latest paperback is promoting.

Victoria A. Rebeck

All the goals stated in the introduction were achieved. Biblical and theological examples were realized. Dignity and respect on the part of the worker and shopper were part of the daily routine. Love in action made way for a new hermeneutic with the shoppers. Human spirits were lifted. Several people in drug recovery have remained clean and have secured permanent jobs. Others have secured jobs that utilized skills they learned during their time at the Bargain Box Too! Several in recovery have said they have found a peace that they did not have before arriving at Saint Paul. It is a peace not born out of lust and greed, but the divine peace of which the Scriptures speak. The greatest need for humanity is revealed in the coming of Jesus. It is not through problem solving, but in intangibles.

Problem solving may be the natural consequence of understanding and caring for one's neighbor, but it does not replace the forging of caring relationships. The call to a particular place in community requires the church to not only hear, but to be in caring relationship with the people of that place. Primary to the church's identity is its role as

neighbor. The first impressions of neighbors are not by investigation, but by conversations. Our conversations are not marked by requesting data for problem solving, but by inviting others to experience the terrain of our heart, inviting others to live out God's love. God's love was lived out in the project and there were many learning experiences.

The most significant learning experience was that everyone could participate in some fashion, and often did. In the words of Booker T. Washington, "in all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress."¹ There were those who donated items, those who told others of the store, those who bought items, those who sold items, and those who helped in the pick up of items. Additionally, residents of the Chestina House and Hallelujah House were helped as they helped others. When the residents arrive, they are required to assist in one of the church ministries. For the first thirty days they report to the Bargain Box Too! They report to the director of the Chestina House who also serves as the store manager.

Physically and structurally, the biggest advantage of the project location is the size of the building. There are several rooms in the building that can be used as additional store and storage space. The thrift store is located in one room and another room has been set up with furniture. There are now couches, stoves, refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, and washing machines, all donated items which are available for sale. Many of the items look new while some have had to be washed. The biggest obstacle to getting the items to the store was securing men for the pick up. Sometimes the items were too heavy to be lifted individually, yet setting a schedule for specific pick-up days worked well for everyone.

¹ Janet Cheatham Bell, ed. *Famous Black Quotations* (Chicago, IL: Sabay Publications, 1986), 55.

One small structural disadvantage of the Bargain Box Too! is that there are no windows in the room. The walls were painted in bright colors and bright lights were hung throughout the room which were great enhancements. Those that know where the Bargain Box Too! is located have shown others. There is a sign on the building, but the store entrance is on the side of the building and most people try to enter the building from the front. A portable sign is put out every day which has helped. Another help has been the establishment of a business in the front of the building with access to the thrift store from the inside of the building.

It was noted that in the fall we received many children's clothes. Shortly after the holidays the bulk of the donations were men's clothes, and in the spring most clothing was women's pieces. We are not sure why this happened, but this has been the pattern.

Overall, the survey responses were excellent, however there was a slight decline in the responses. Some possible reasons for the decline in the number of survey responses were: repeat shoppers who did not feel the need to answer another questionnaire especially if one had been completed within two weeks, weather, and there were two holidays during one period and the store was closed. It was noted that, whenever it rained, sales were down. Savannah is in a low-lying area and much of the city's sewer system is antiquated. Streets are prone to flooding when tides are high and there is a rain storm.

At the beginning of this ministry, there was an employed security guard, but that need was eliminated because the store was open everyday. The drawer was always maintained at fifty dollars. If there was a large money transaction, a call for immediate pick-up of cash was placed to an assigned church officer who took the money and delivered it to the Recording Steward.

Even though sales are now brisk, the shop has a constant overflow of generous donations. Sometimes, donors must be asked to wait. Jeans, sweatshirts, large-size adult clothing, and toddler clothing remain in great demand. The profits from the sales continue to go to the St. Paul Academy for Boys.

The project was welcomed in the community, yet there are some distinct advantages and disadvantages of a thrift store. Some advantages are: profits go to a charity or organization that appreciates the help, there are unbelievably low prices, at times there is new merchandise for purchase, and everything for sale, such as clothing for men, women, children, appliances, furniture, and toys is under one roof. Sales are offered on a regular basis. Those who make donations can receive a tax deduction for the amount donated. Overall, there is a large selection of merchandise.

The cost to operate a local thrift store generally will be lower than any other comparable service in a community because the work is done entirely by volunteers. Expenses were minimal, yet the costs will vary from state to state, city to city, and community to community. Although set-up costs are minimal, there must be planning. Operations are smoother when there is one employed supervisor. The business was profitable without high overhead. For those living on a limited budget, the thrift store provided another shopping avenue at reasonable costs and, with neighborhood shoppers, it kept dollars in the community.

The disadvantages are comparatively minimal. Sales are final, yet Bargain Box Too! offers a limited return policy. In some cases, shoppers bought items for homebound individuals. If the items do not work for the individual, they are allowed to be returned within forty-eight hours. There is a five dollar maximum return policy. Another disadvantage is that most of the merchandise that is sold is used and the customer must

double check merchandise for stains or noticeable defects. What you see is what there is.

Generally, there was not another size of an item in the storeroom on used merchandise.

Brochures about the school and the church services were at the check-out counter.

The brochures were put into the bags with the goods purchased at check-out.

While this project-in-ministry was started to benefit those with limited incomes, not all customers were on limited or nonexistent budgets. The store attracts dedicated bargain hunters and those who make the most of their money. The store was open every day from 10:00 A.M. until 6:00 P.M. Monday through Friday and from 10:00 A.M. until 3:00 P.M. on Saturday, which increased the number of shoppers.

The project enabled people to see that the church can interact with the community in a hands-on approach and still be well within the framework of the Christian faith. In the words of author, Luther E. Smith,

A church's neighborhood is the living text which, to be understood, requires sensitive and persistent exegesis. Congregations sometimes assume that because they are located in a neighborhood, they know it well. This assumption arises from having a presence in the community that allows them to see signs of stability, development, or deterioration. But knowing a community primarily comes through listening to it. And listening occurs through relationships with its people. Frequently, churches conduct surveys and use census data to attain statistics about their community. While they may be sincerely motivated to develop a community profile that informs their mission efforts, if this is their only approach to understanding the community, they will miss knowing the people. People are not known through answers to surveys nor through computer printouts. The community's people are known best through relationship with them. It is in relationship that churches come to hear people's stories of their lives in the community—to hear about times of celebration and times of disappointment to hear about fears and dreams that will only be told in a relationship of trust.²

² Smith, *Intimacy and Mission*, 154.

The church is asked to proclaim its gospel message with bold assurance that it has the answer to the problems that keep the world in turmoil. Although the church is to be a herald of God's good news, its speech must be informed by what it has heard. Before one speaks, one must listen. The data and the sales revealed that the Bargain Box Too! was beneficial in the neighborhood. Religious communities symbolize hope. In them, congregations, members, and pastors experiment with methods that enable ideals to become reality. However, the instructive potential of religious communities as ordained by God may finally depend on the larger church's readiness to accept and respect such actions as legitimate expressions of faith in action. Truth can only be discovered if we forsake the arrogance of certainty and adopt humility for seeking.

The project was challenging, especially when sales were down. Thinking of new ways to be a viable resource in the community was always present. There were days when it felt as if nobody was interested in used items, yet this perception would change when someone would come to the store, purchase items, and thank us for being a resource in the community. Various strategies were implemented to best serve the customer and workers. Being open six days a week increased sales tremendously. One person suggested the racks be moved around for better accessibility. Her suggestion gave the shop a less cluttered look. As clothes came in, they were sorted immediately and accordingly—garbage, clean up, floor for sale. The dollar bag concept was a huge success and it was continued to twice a month on Wednesdays. Wednesdays were the slowest day of the week. The dollar bag concept did several things. It allowed shoppers to get much more for their dollar, it moved merchandise off the floor making way for new merchandise, and eliminated the need to tag articles since everything was one set price.

At one point, donations were so overwhelming that some surplus items had to be discarded. The writer would tactfully ask about potential donations from callers. She would ask the caller if they would give these items to a relative. If the answer was no, then the suggestion was made that maybe the items needed to be discarded. She went on to explain that every dollar spent on disposing items is a potential loss of assistance to the Academy.

To eliminate items that did not sell within sixty days, a textile salvager company that buys bales of cotton was located and a barrel was set aside to collect all discarded cotton. When enough has been gathered, it was sold to the company.

For future projects, instead of selling cotton to a cotton baler, usable clothing might be boxed and sent to oversea missions.

The survey results indicated that this project can be replicated. The questionnaire that was used in Savannah, Georgia can be replicated in another city or even administered at a later date in the same location to assess differences attributable to location or time. The data indicated that the thrift store was beneficial to the community by being in the community. Money is staying in the community, a building is being utilized, and the store is easily accessible to local residents.

The church is able to participate on both sides—support through donations and support through purchases. The success of the project was reflected in the faces of shoppers, workers and the receipts that went to the church.

Although not a goal, the development of a business plan and how to start a business evolved. We learned about the basic necessities such as a business license, telephone and electricity. Under the umbrella of the church, the ministry is considered non-profit so no business license is needed. The use of a business license is unique to each

jurisdiction and each state, so investigating its need is worthwhile. There will be other costs, but the decision to incur them will be dependent upon how the business decides to expand its services.

Other people throughout the United States have caught the vision of how beneficial a compassionate outreach ministry can be not only in a neighborhood, but also a congregation. Giving is an act of grace and a means of doing that which God has called us to do—be a servant. Ministers and laity who visit St. Paul and see what is happening have mailed donations to the Bargain Box Too! when they return home. Items have come from as far away as California, Chicago, and New Jersey.

Finally, people who thought they had no skills or were not marketable, gained invaluable experience which bolstered their self-esteem and self-confidence levels. Jesus does not describe neighbor in terms of geography but in terms of compassion. God brought unexpected people into our lives for a reason. These persons gained management skills, advertising strategies, and experienced community in an informal setting. Residents of the Chestina House and Hallelujah House were helped and they helped. Many of the men and women come into the program with very little clothing and are unemployed. The Bargain Box provided clothes for many job interviews. Three of the workers have gone on to secure jobs in the retail industry utilizing what they gained from their time at the Bargain Box Too! When asked to fill out the survey form, as stated before, two people could not read. They agreed to enroll in the adult continuing education program. A member of the church is also an employee of this program. She was contacted and they enrolled. One is steadily learning new words everyday while the other person is excited about being able to read words in the Bible.

Building a relationship with other agencies in the city opened the door for medical services for two others. Appointments for dental work and eye care were made.

Some did not feel prepared, yet they came to the Bargain Box Too! seeking a better life. For others, being in a formal job setting was frightening so starting slowly at the Bargain Box Too! helped tremendously. Clothes were folded, floors were swept, and regular maintenance of the store was done, but there was never mumbling or grumbling. It was done with sincerity. All of the workers have used the Bargain Box Too! as a reference.

This project was viable—it strengthened the local community by providing a service specifically to residents in the community, bolstered the self-esteem level of persons in substance abuse recovery, and aided St. Paul Academy for Boys. Both sides, the worker and the shopper in many instances, realized a deeper sense of human dignity and self-worth, a renewed practice for caring for one's neighbor and confidence for shaping the future in a way that is more just and life affirming.³

As long as there is a neighborhood, as long as there are inhabitants in the neighborhood or city, there is a future for the church. Sometimes it is not the future the church wants, nor the future that church members are prepared to enter, nevertheless, unless and until Jesus Christ comes, a neighborhood or urban church always has a future. Visionary churches seek to include all inhabitants of the city in its worship, ministry, programming, membership and leadership of the church. Visionary churches thank God for calling them to this hour, to the future, to be the Church of Jesus Christ.⁴

³ Nile Harper, *Vital Signs in Urban Churches* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Co.), 10.

⁴ Marla E. Brown, "How To Get Others Involved in Mission," Lecture delivered at Wings Lay Ministry Academy, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, OH on March 24, 2003.

Future projects might be linking three or more ministries, such as clothing, feeding and drug recovery with tutoring and mentoring. The store served the community, and there are many opportunities for other ministries. Linking, not overlapping, the ministries would probably prove worthwhile. One ministry that might enhance the store's presence and benefit individuals would be the presence of a certified person of pastoral care two or three days a week who is available for conversation with the clients and workers. Conversations would be informal and if further discussion is needed an appointment would be set up or a referral given. Linking the drug recovery ministry with a job training ministry with the goal to create conditions for success would be beneficial. The job training ministry would provide information on filling out applications and the need to be honest in providing information, writing resumes, punctuality, and dressing for interviews. Another ministry link could be with healthcare providers. The expansion of God's kingdom is limitless when we love unconditionally.

The call to community for future projects might include surrounding faith congregations supporting a specific outreach ministry for the elderly. An outreach ministry in the neighborhood supported by local faith congregations would bring the community closer.

Initially, the project started with the selfish motive of completing an assignment. As time continued, the motives changed. There now exists a sincere love for this model-in-ministry project and for the people of God. The scriptures of Matthew 7:1, "judge not, lest ye be judged" were shown, the Good Samaritan story came to life in Luke 10:25-37 and Matthew 25:36-41 served as a foundation. "All my carefully thought theology,

worked out on the pews of my church no longer fit the reality.”⁵ It was realized that because of the love of Christ for us and His love in us and for others, the Cross of Jesus can be recognized. The Cross of Calvary is sin at its worst, but also love at its best. In the words of Dr. William Jones, “the Cross is for beggars to come for the ultimate manifestation of the love divine.”⁶ The table is set and all are welcome.

The project for the writer became a ministry that is loved unconditionally. It also allowed this writer to encounter people of God who were about kingdom building and God’s people who did not know about kingdom building. The gospel of Jesus Christ admonishes us to love one another and in love, know our neighbor. The writer also was forced to meet, dine, and live with the disinherited and the poor, and to realize that, wherever there are people, God’s kingdom can be enlarged if it is carried out in love and compassion. Humility, love, compassion, dignity, partnership, and dependability were not only words associated with this project, but actions that enabled it to be completed and thus replicated. Having understood and responded to Christ’s call to compassion, the practice of living among and siding with those who suffer remains far easier than the continual opening up of ourselves to newness and creativity in our ministry programs and plans.

In an inner-city neighborhood of Savannah, Georgia, this writer was privileged to live, work, and worship with a group of Christians who believed that God still blesses the poor. The power of the gospel was able to transcend and transform not only the author’s

⁵ Schlabach, *And Who Is My Neighbor*, 49.

⁶ William A. Jones, Lecture on “Preaching and Leadership for the Church in the 21st Century” Doctor of Ministry Intensive Seminar, United Theological Seminary, Dayton, Ohio, 13 August 2003.

life, but everyone else who participated in the project. Dignity and diversity were preserved and love was generated unconditionally.

Religious communities symbolize hope. In them, congregations, members, and pastors experiment with methods that enable ideals to become reality. However, the instructive potential of religious communities as ordained by God may finally depend on the larger church's readiness to accept and respect such actions as legitimate expressions of faith in action. Truth can only be discovered if we forsake the arrogance of certainty and adopt humility for seeking.

Inwardly, the Bargain Box Too! as a compassionate outreach ministry centered on love, shielded those who had been kicked by society until they were ready to venture out again, and outwardly girded those with strength and assurance that they could make it on meager incomes. We encountered many persons who would be deemed success stories. They just needed a compassionate person to acknowledge their presence.

God's message through the prophet Zechariah, to see that justice is done, to show kindness and mercy to one another, not to oppress widows, orphans, foreigners who live among you or anyone else in need, does not change with political and ideological fashion or the most recent election trends. The Gospel's injunction, foretold by the prophet Isaiah is to be brought into the world by a poor, homeless child Christians call Savior and to bring good rather than bad news for the poor. God's call to heal and to care is clear and unchanging.

Writing this project helped keep this construct alive and to memorialize the many people who taught this writer so much by the simple practice of humanity and the exercise of hope through love. More than their words, they shared their surging aspirations and crushing struggles with the writer and context associates who were fortunate enough to

experience it all. The staff, context associates, and this writer encountered people who were swimming with the tide of rising expectations, while others throughout the neighborhood were drowning in disproportionate numbers. The Bargain Box Too! constructed a new contextual practice for the church of the future. Linking ministries can lead to empowerment on both sides.

I John 3:17 says, “but whoso hath this world’s good and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, who dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word neither in tongue but in deed and truth.”⁷

⁷ I John 3:17, KJV

APPENDIX A
FLYER ADVERTISEMENT

BARGAIN BOX TOO!!!

a ministry of the
St. Paul CME Church

Great Buys
for the Whole Family

Clothes, Shoes, Books, Coats
Draperies, Pots, Pans, Toys
Towels, Sheets, etc.

MON., WED., THURS., FRI.

11 AM - 5 PM

TUES. 2 PM - 6 PM

SAT. 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM

AT

1601 BULL STREET
(CORNER OF 33RD AND BULL)
233-9173

THE REV HENRY R DELANEY
PASTOR ST. PAUL CME CHURCH

Every Tuesday is \$1.00 Bag Day
All Other Days - Bags are \$2.00

All proceeds benefit the St. Paul Academy for Boys

BARGAIN BOX TOO!!!

a ministry of the
St. Paul CME Church

Great Buys
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Clothes, Shoes, Books, Coats
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All proceeds benefit the St. Paul Academy for Boys

APPENDIX B
BUSINESS PLAN

BUSINESS PLAN

Objective - Set up, manage, and operate a church based thrift store

Name of business - All businesses must register with the Secretary of State.

Products - The merchandise will consist of donated clothing housewares, toys, books, furniture and household furnishings.

Customers - A cross-section of the population of Savannah-Chatham County.

Pricing - The items will carry moderate to low prices ranging from \$1.00 on up depending on the quality of the item, but also keeping in line with other stores of the same type. All items will be color coded to know the date products were put on the floor.

Capital Outlay - The capital outlay will be minimal due to the financial involvement of the church.

Expenses - Rent, utilities, and supplies will cost \$500 per month.

Marketing Strategies - Public Service announcements on television and radio, posting signs on bulletin boards in churches, word of mouth, and flyers passed in the neighborhood.

Needed Equipment and Supplies - clothing racks, shelving, cash register, pricing labels, showcases, hangers, display racks, bags, adding machine tape, telephone, and a *radio.

* A radio or some form of music breaks the monotony of a completely quiet atmosphere.

APPENDIX C
HOW TO GET STARTED

HOW TO GET STARTED

- Make a Budget
 - Look at how much money is available to spend
 - How much can you afford without being in the red

- Check the Demographics of the Area
 - Assess the need a product via a poll verbally or in writing
 - Assess the area population to determine demand

- Check Your Competitors
 - Look at how well their businesses are doing

- Pick a Suitable Location Keeping in Mind
 - Public Transportation
 - Accessibility to Park Cars
 - If location is on a busy street - are you able to stop easily

- Look at the Location Itself
 - Can it be enlarged
 - Is it conducive to the product

- Clientele
 - Is your target group
 - A particular age category
 - The masses
 - The poor, the wealthy
 - Gender specific
 - Based on income

- Pricing
 - Be competitive, but do not price your goods too high or too low
 - How is your product compare to competitors

- Advertise product In/On
 - Local Newspapers
 - Word of Mouth
 - Daily Newspaper
 - Nearby schools such as colleges or trade schools
 - Public service television stations

- Try to project market growth
 - Short Term
 - Long Term

- Have Compassion, Integrity and Willingness to Learn

APPENDIX D
MANAGEMENT AND INVENTORY

MANAGEMENT AND INVENTORY

Keep in a small file box information about volunteers and employees

- A. Name Address, and telephone number
- B. Any special medical needs
- C. Telephone number and name of emergency contact
- D. Birthday

Keep in a small file box information for potential donors and suppliers

- A. Name of business
- B. Contact person
- C. Products provided

Inventory

- A. All goods should be accounted for
- B. Equipment purchases should be duly noted
- C. Know what is currently owned, leased and/or rented
- D. Keep a list of all insurances

Taxes and Insurance

- A. Know what kind of taxes have to be paid
- B. Know what types of insurances are needed and the cost
- C. Know which state, federal and local regulations apply to the specific business

APPENDIX E

OVERVIEW OF THE HALLELUJAH HOUSE AND CHESTINA HOUSE



ST. PAUL CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

1601 Barnard Street Savannah, GA 31401

912-233-2849

Rev. Henry Delaney, Pastor

Mr. Frank Miles, Hallelujah House Director
Ms. Traquia Scott, Chestina House Director

St. Paul CME Church is engaged in a ministry to save hurting men and women. The Hallelujah House, a 16 bed transitional residence for men recovering from substance abuse and/or recently released from prison opened in the spring of 1994, and the Chestina House, a residence for women opened in March 1995.

The programs are set up as 90-day residency programs that can be extended if necessary. The mission of each program is to minister the love, faith and hope of Jesus Christ to hurting men and women. This is done by teaching and training Biblical truths and principles of God's Word that when practiced, will make them free of chemical dependency and any other addictions. It will also enable the men and women to become persons of Christian character equipped to make significant contributions to the body of Christ, their families, the community, and society "at-large."

The residents are required to participate in specific church meetings such as Bible Study, Shepherd's Class, and AMEN (a support group), and in-house morning devotion.

When entering the program, the resident must adhere to an in-house 30 day restriction period. During this restriction, it is mandatory for to participate in the 30 day WFAL (Working for a Living) work schedule, Monday through Friday from 10:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M. in various church ministries. The WFAL accommodates the room and board fee.

After the 30 days, residents are required to seek outside employment, and learn how to successfully manage their lives and their funds.

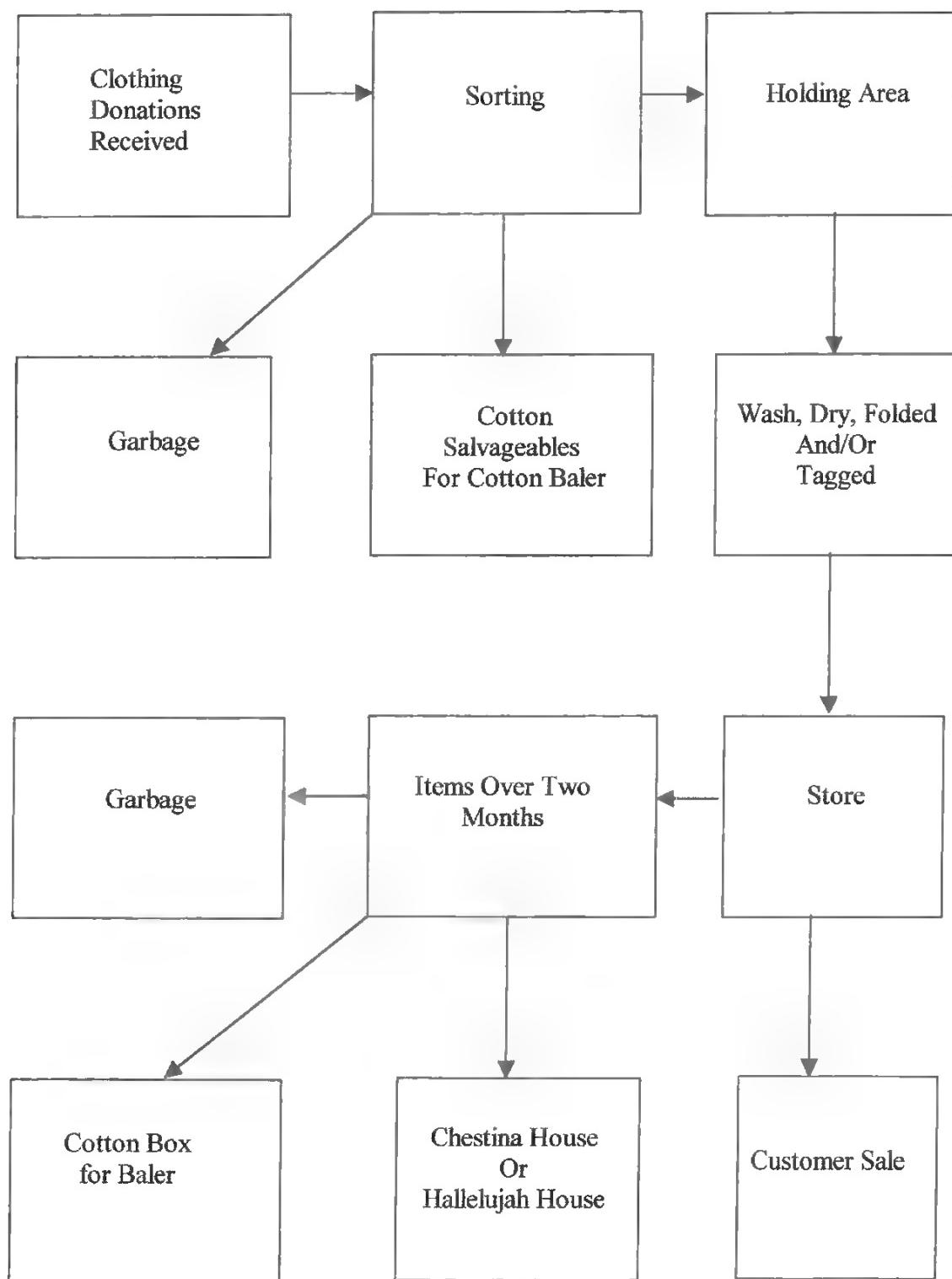
Because of participation in and completion of this program, the following goals will be achieved:

- Acceptance of Jesus Christ as their personal Savior
- Maintain consistent levels of positive and appropriate conduct in the home, community and social environments

Should you need any further information, please contact the church at the above address or telephone number and inquire about our program.

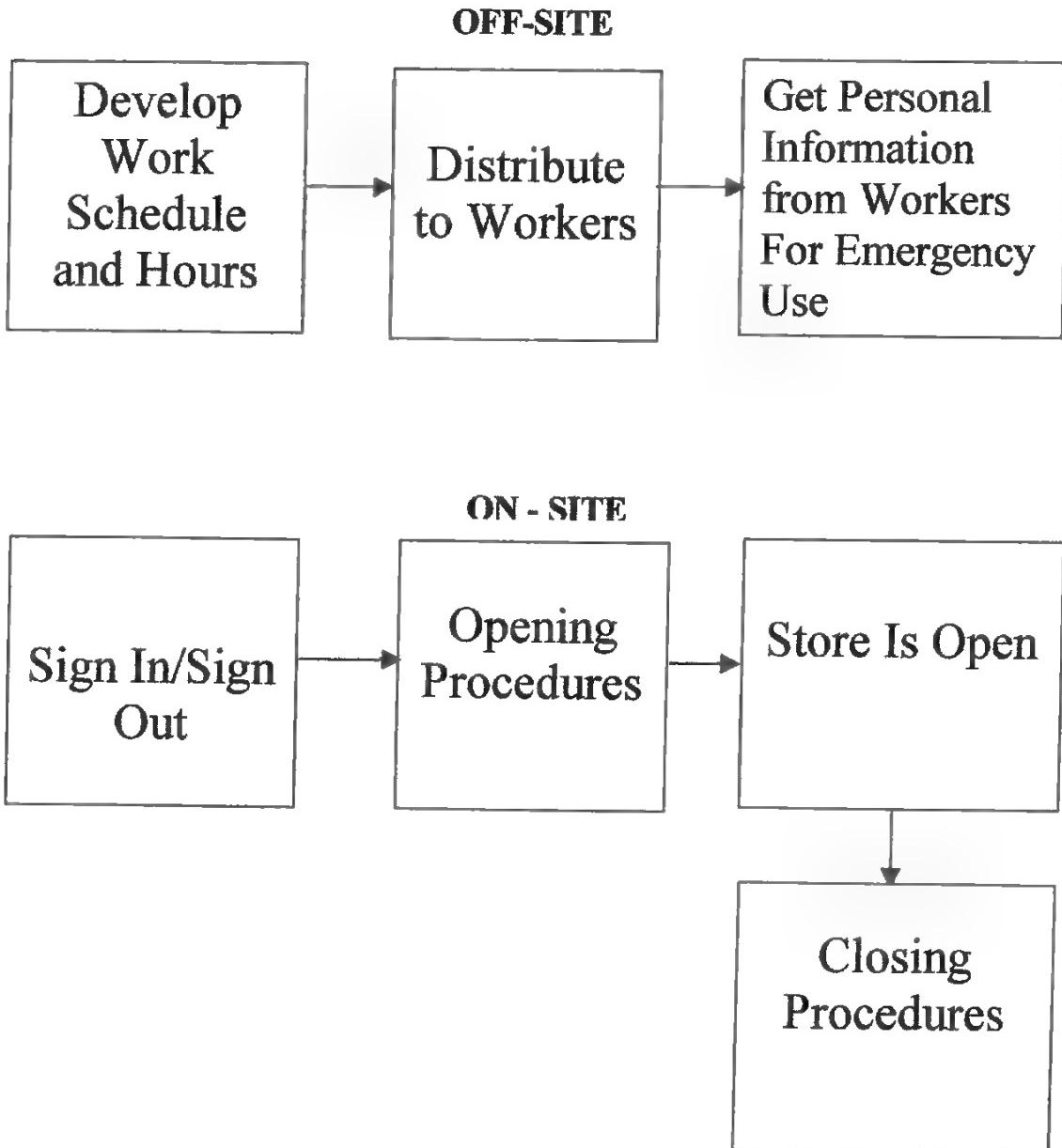
APPENDIX F
FLOW CHART OF CLOTHING DONATIONS

FLOW CHART OF CLOTHING DONATIONS



APPENDIX G
FLOW CHART OF DAILY OPERATIONS

FLOW CHART OF OPERATIONS



APPENDIX H
LETTER TO VOLUNTEERS

BARGAIN BOX TOO!
1601 Bull Street Savannah, GA 31401
912-233-9173

Dear Volunteer,

Thank you for volunteering at the Bargain Box Too! It is because of your desire to volunteer that we are able to be an "Armor of Mission" in the community. Your spirit of giving your time will surely help many needy persons in the community.

As concerned Christians, we sometimes look beyond the shores of our own country to extend a helping hand, and in so doing, overlook the need right here in our own neighborhood.

Your generosity is an example of putting Christianity to work for others, with no conditions or strings attached, just a lot of love.

You are here to be a blessing, but I guarantee that you will be blessed.

Thanks again for making a difference.

If necessary and if possible, please plan at arrive 15 minutes before opening and if possible, please remain 15 minutes after closing.

Sincerely,

Rev. Sheila Daniels Calhoun

APPENDIX I
PICTURE OF SAINT PAUL CHRISTIAN METHODIST
EPISCOPAL CHURCH

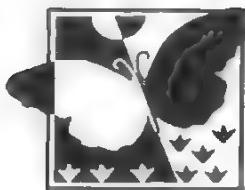


ST. PAUL CHRISTIAN METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH
1601 Barnard Street
Savannah, GA 31401

APPENDIX J
PICTURES OF THE BARGAIN BOX TOO!



APPENDIX K
QUESTIONNAIRE DISTRIBUTED AT BARGAIN BOX TOO!



Questionnaire
The Bargain Box, Too!
A Ministry of St. Paul CME Church – Savannah, GA

Thank you very much for taking the time to answer the following questions. Any comments are welcome.

Questions

Yes No

1. Has this store helped you save money?		
2. Did you like the selection of the clothing?		
3. Is this your first visit here?		
4. Do you think you will come here again to shop?		
5. Would you recommend this store to someone else?		
6. Was this a pleasant shopping experience for you?		
7. Do you live in the immediate neighborhood?		
8. Are the store hours convenient?		
9. Would you like to see the dollar bag day more often?		
10. Are you the male / female (please circle one) head of your household?		
11. Are you disabled, retired, or unemployed?		
12. Are you a student?		
13. How did you first learn about the Bargain Box Too!? Newspaper Radio Television Relative or Family Member Friend Church Member Flyer Passing By Building Other (please specify)		
14. What is the one major reason why you visited this store? (Please circle one) The price of goods The selection of merchandise The location of the store Friendly, helpful staff Some other reason (please specify)		
15. What specific items would you like to see carried at this store? (Circle All That Apply) Household Appliances Furniture Electronics Sporting Goods Adult Clothing Toys Toddler Clothing Jewelry Tools Other (Please specify)		
16. How long have you lived in this neighborhood? (Please circle) 1-3 years 4-6 years 7-9 years 9 or more years Do not live in community		
17. Who do you shop for the <u>most</u> while in the Bargain Box Too!? (Please circle one) Self Children Parents Friends Grandchildren Spouse Other(please specify)		
18. Do you own a car? (please circle)	Yes	No
19. What form of transportation do you use the <u>most</u> ? Own Car Public Transportation Friend Other (please specify)		
20. What is the ZIP code of your residence?		

Thank you very much for completing this questionnaire. Your comments are greatly appreciated.

APPENDIX L
SURVEY FOR THIRTY DAY WORKERS

QUESTIONS FOR 30 DAY GRADUATES

Please Answer These Questions to the Best of Your Ability

Question	Yes	No
Did you know that completing 30 days here means you have now worked in the retail industry?		
Have you ever worked in retail before?		
Has this experience increased your self-esteem?		
If so, how? Please be specific		
If you are from Savannah, have you recommended this store to any of your friends?		
Would you recommend this store to someone else?		
Has this experience had a positive influence on your life?		
Please indicate your general level of satisfaction with life at this point in time?		
Good <input type="checkbox"/> Bad <input type="checkbox"/> OK <input type="checkbox"/> Highly Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Satisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Dissatisfied <input type="checkbox"/> Highly Dissatisfied <input type="checkbox"/>		
Do you think you can use any skills learned from this job?		
Has this job and/or setting helped you spiritually?		
If so, how?		
If not, what would you recommend be done differently?		

Any additional comments –

Your comments will have no bearing on your participation in the Chestina/Hallelujah House program.

You may use us as a reference.

Thank you very much for your time and assistance.

APPENDIX M
INFORMATION ON SAINT PAUL ACADEMY FOR BOYS

St. Paul Academy for Boys



Address all inquiries to:

**St. Paul Academy for Boys
315 West 38th Street
Savannah, Georgia 31401**

Attn: Principal



"*Let us make man.*"

Genesis 1:26

315 West 38th Street
Savannah, Georgia 31401
(912) 232-0579

Statement of Purpose

The St. Paul Academy for Boys is an institution devoted to developing boys spiritually, educationally, socially, and economically. The need for a well-rounded program for males can not be over-emphasized. The "ACADEMY" is dedicated to fulfill a dire need in our community and in our world. With the blessings of God and the support of concerned persons, the goal of "making men" will be a reality of great proportions.



General Information

The Academy is for boys in the 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th grades. The curriculum will be standard academics, but will include Bible, Religion, and African American History. The sports will be tennis and basketball. Choral groups and community service activities are to be stressed.

I. Curriculum

1. Math
2. Science
3. Religion
4. French
5. Language Arts
 - Including African-American Literature
6. Social Studies
 - Including African-American History

II. Special Features

1. School Choir
2. Daily Morning Devotions
3. Vital Instructors Parent/Student(VIPS)
4. Required Parent/Teacher Conferences
5. Monthly PTO Meeting

Tuition is \$2,200.00 per year in grades 2 – 8, and \$2,400.00 per year in grades 9 – 12. Some scholarships are available for some students with hardship.

Revised 1991

**ST. PAUL ACADEMY FOR BOYS
DRESS CODE & FINANCIAL INFORMATION**

In an effort to create a positive climate for learning and to promote desirable behavior, it is important that students adhere to the Academy dress code. **IT IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE PARENT OR GUARDIAN TO SEE THAT THE STUDENT IS PROPERLY DRESSED DAILY.** Parents or guardians are encouraged to monitor the attire before students leave home. The Academy asks your cooperation in observing the following guidelines:

1. Students must pay proper attention to their personal hygiene and must be in uniform at all times. Students must report to the Academy in uniform and will leave the Academy in proper uniform. There will be a penalty to pay if the students are out of uniform at any time.
2. The following guidelines should be observed.

Pants:	Long navy blue pants must be worn above the hips with a <u>black buckled belt</u> .
Shirts:	White oxford cloth shirt must be tucked in at the waist.
Socks:	Navy blue socks are to be worn.
Shoes:	Black shoes are to be neat, clean, and in good condition. Tennis Shoes must not be worn, no exceptions.
Ties:	Solid navy blue ties.
Hair:	Hair is to be clean, neatly groomed, and conservatively cut. Designs in hair and razztail haircuts are not permitted.
Jackets:	Navy blue, black or tan jackets must be worn. Bright colored jackets are not acceptable. Designer jackets are not acceptable.
3. Students may not wear hats or caps; sunglasses may not be worn inside the Academy.
4. Any other attire which attracts undue attention to the wearer is inappropriate. Examples are as follows: earrings, gold chains, gold tooth, rings, key chains, etc.

The final decision, in any case, rest with the teacher and/or administrator.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Yearly Tuition -	Grades 2 – 8, \$2,200.00 Paid in full or ten(10) monthly installments of \$220.00, Beginning the first(1 st) day of school. (Will change if financial aid is applied.)
	Grades 9 – 10, \$2,400.00 Paid in full or ten(10) monthly installments of \$240.00, Beginning the first(1 st) day of school. (Will change if financial aid is applied.)
Annual Book Fee -	Grades 2 – 8, \$200.00/Grades 9 – 12, \$300.00
Application Processing Fee -	\$10.00
Lunch -	\$1.25 Daily, \$6.25 Weekly

NOTICE: FEES ARE NON-REFUNDABLE.

NOTICE: The ST. PAUL ACADEMY for BOYS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in its admissions, policies, scholarship, athletic, or other school administered programs.

APPENDIX N
CENSUS TRACT INFORMATION

SAVANNAH, GEORGIA

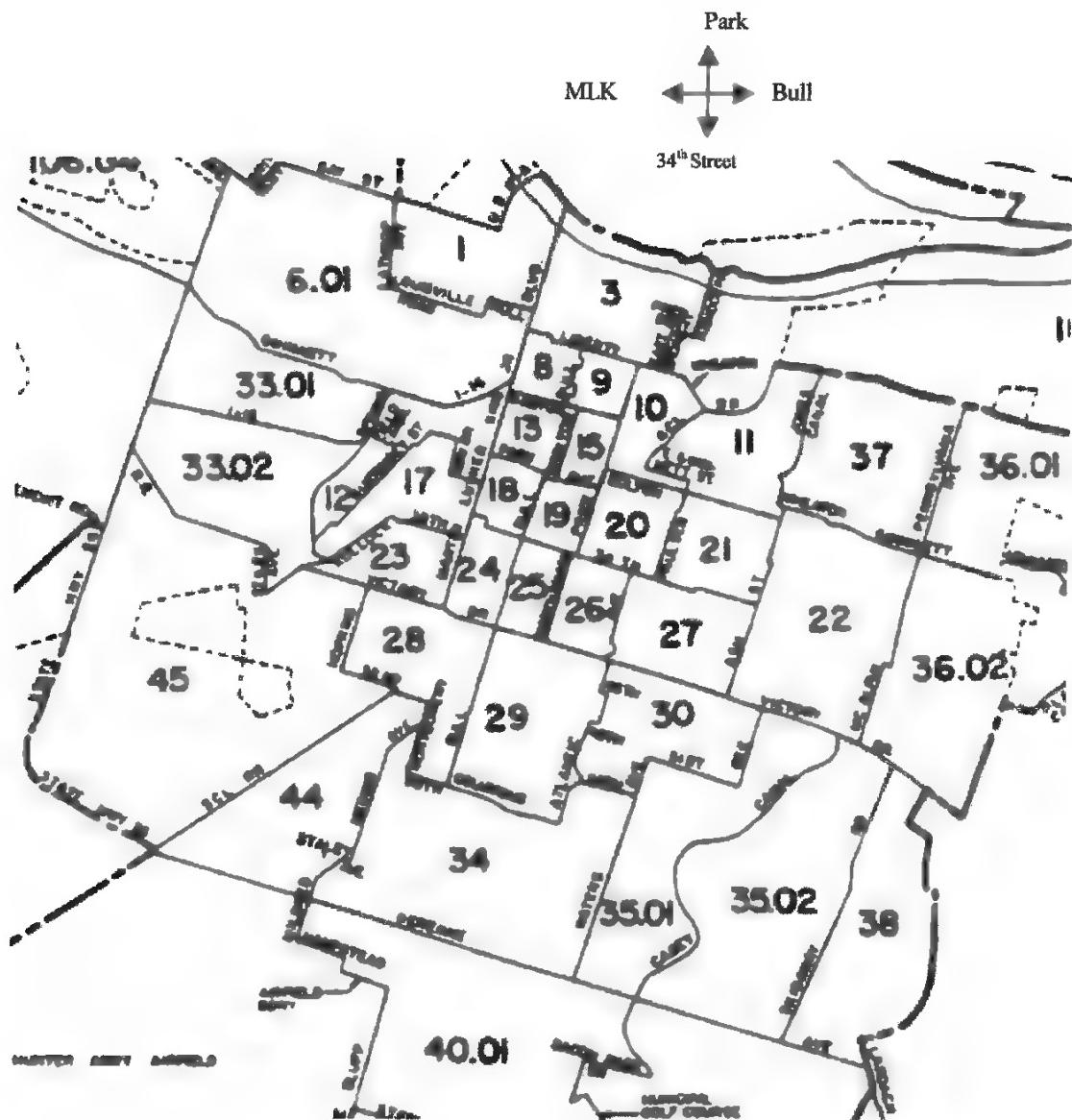
SAVANNAH											
TOTAL POP	AGES 0-4		AGES 5-19		AGES 20-64		AGES 65+		SCHOOL ENROLL	NON WHITE	
141,060	TOTAL	PCT	TOTAL	PCT	TOTAL	PCT	TOTAL	PCT	37,229	TOTAL	PCT
MALE	FEMALE		(\$,000'S)		PER CAP INCOME		PER/DWELL INCOME		TOTAL AUTOS	AUTO PER DWELLING	
TOTAL 66,350	TOTAL 47.0	TOTAL 74,710	PCT 53.0	TAXABLE SALES \$2,405,907		TOTAL \$16,679	PCT \$43,141	TOTAL 95,684	PCT 1.75		
DWELL NO AUTO 7,671	DWELL 1 AUTO 20,663	DWELL 2 AUTOS 19,379	DWELL 3+AUTOS 6,823	TOTAL DWELL 59,373	OCCUPIED DWELL 54,536	VAC RATE 8.1	TOT ACRES 49,578.82	DWELL DENSITY 1.20			
TOTAL EMPLOY 69,068	MFG EMP 2,497	PCT 3.6	RET EMP 14,895	PCT 21.6	SER EMP 51,576	PCT 74.8	RESIDENTIAL ACREAGE 7,325	TOTAL PCT 14.8	DENS 8.11	SQ FT RES LOT 5,374	

THOMAS STREETCAR HISTORIC DISTRICT

CENSUS TRACT 01800											
TOTAL POP	AGES 0-4		AGES 5-19		AGES 20-64		AGES 65+		SCHOOL ENROLL	NON WHITE	
1,188	TOTAL	PCT	TOTAL	PCT	TOTAL	PCT	TOTAL	PCT	310	TOTAL	PCT
MALE	FEMALE		(\$,000'S)		PER CAP INCOME		PER/DWELL INCOME		TOTAL AUTOS	AUTO PER DWELLING	
TOTAL 545	TOTAL 45.9	TOTAL 643	PCT 54.1	TAXABLE SALES \$24,020		TOTAL \$7,737	PCT \$18,682	TOTAL 688	PCT 1.40		
DWELL NO AUTO 194	DWELL 1 AUTO 234	DWELL 2 AUTOS 62	DWELL 3+AUTOS 2	TOTAL DWELL 597	OCCUPIED DWELL 492	VAC RATE 17.6	TOT ACRES 75.39	DWELL DENSITY 7.92			
TOTAL EMPLOY 735	MFG EMP 8	PCT 1.1	RET EMP 158	PCT 21.5	SER EMP 569	PCT 77.4	RESIDENTIAL ACREAGE 24	TOTAL PCT 32.3	DENS 24.55	SQ FT RES LOT 1,775	

APPENDIX O
CENSUS TRACT MAP OF AREA STUDIED - NUMBER 18

**CENSUS TRACT MAP OF CHATHAM COUNTY
AREA STUDIED NUMBER 18**



APPENDIX P
LOVE IN ACTION

LOVE IN ACTION

The success of the Bargain Box Too! is not able to measured quantitatively. It has been blessed in ways that cannot be measured with physical instruments. It is only through the stories that are told and the repeat customers that as a tool of compassion the model-in-ministry project has been successful. It has been a blessing to others. You might ask—How do I know we have been a blessing? The following stories demonstrate that we have been a blessing and in each case, demonstrated the compassion of Christ. Jesus was present in each person encountered. Democracy makes no sense to the vast majority of residents who are locked out of the economic game. It all makes sense when that lock is broken and all can sit and dialogue at the table comfortable in their own uniqueness. The holistic ministry of Jesus was played out in so many instances.

A young lady asked if she could volunteer in the Bargain Box Too! I am always glad to have more people join us and told her sure. We set up a time schedule and I waited for her to come. She is an eighteen-year-old single parent who has quit school. Her parents, although they are together, are both drug addicts. Her biggest fear is that she would succumb to the drug culture if she did not find somewhere to go and use her time constructively. She comes faithfully to the store and helps sort and fold clothes. She has since invited a friend who also comes to help out. Several things have happened since she has come. Informally, mentoring has been done. She has signed up for school to receive her GED, moved on her own, and secured a job. She now shops at the store for her and her child proudly and no longer feels ashamed. We sat down and set up a budget that would work best for her. She has thanked me on more than one occasion for my encouragement.

On another occasion a gentleman came looking for a suit. He had been referred by a neighbor. This man was a laid off construction worker, who did not have money to buy a suit to attend the funeral of his teenaged nephew who had been murdered. We were pleased when we found a shirt, tie, belt, socks and a suit that fit all for ten dollars. He and his sister who had accompanied him thanked us over and over. St. Paul is part of the community. Whenever we can, we try to accommodate a person.

At another time a young girl and her friend just happened by the store. They had seen the door open, but had never ventured into the store. On this particular day they came into Bargain Box Too!. She was looking for a graduation dress. Friday evenings traditionally are light so we all helped her to find a dress. She found one, but it needed some alterations. She said she would be back the next day to pick up her dress. She checked with her grandmother and realized that she could not do the alterations. She mentioned this to me when she came to make her purchase. I told her that would be no problem, and I phoned a seamstress at the church. She came back a week after graduation to thank me for helping her get her graduation dress. Inwardly, I thanked God for allowing me to be empathetic and compassionate.

Although it was not planned, Friday evening was the day that shoppers brought their children. The children would get restless and sometimes turn the shopping spree sour. Overall, the children were obedient, but restless. I got a box of toys together from various donations that had been received and set up a toy area. The children loved it and so did the parents. Each child was allowed to take one toy home when they were about to leave. I would replenish the box as we received new donations. When I see these same children in the community and at church, I encourage them and share with them God's goodness.

There are so many vices that are claiming our youth. If we do not "get" them, then the streets shall get them. It is important to educate our children not only in a formal setting, but also informal settings. Although I am a minister at the church, the children and youth do not feel I am unapproachable. My days varied from the church to the store. I was in the office for a portion of the day and then at the store. I do not have any biological children of my own, yet I do feel the community children are my children. I believe in them and encourage them to believe in themselves. It only takes one person to make a difference in the life of a child.

The Bargain Box Too! served as another means of ministry in witnessing to youth and providing work skills. It is common conversation to hear youth converse about their probation officers. It is hard for some to believe we adults do not have or did not have probation officers as we were growing up. Many of these children have great potential, but are channeling their interests in negative directions. This is where the church is so desperately needed. It is a prime opportunity for the church to minister to the child/youth and parent. I was afforded this opportunity through the Bargain Box Too!

The teens that helped at the store came from a variety of backgrounds. Some are products of single parent homes. Some are being raised by grandparents because the mother is incarcerated and the father is a drug addict. Some of the teens are excelling in school, while others struggle with the thought of dropping out of school.

One of the teens came with her mom to help at the store. Her name was Keisha. She had been suspended from school, and school had just started a few weeks prior to her suspension. She is a good worker and has a good sense of business. She can count up money and put things together quickly. Her favorite subjects are Math and Science. She

showed me the letter that she had been accepted into a computer program. She has agreed to try to stay in school. That is the most that can be asked of her at this time.

She agreed to share her monthly school progress report with me and ask for tutoring in needed subjects.

A personal concern for me is the demise of our African American youth.

Statistically, figures say that by the turn of the century, 50% of all African American males will be incarcerated. The church must take a stance on the future of our children. If this does not happen, surely in five to ten years, the juvenile delinquency rate will have increased substantially. The key is to get more people involved. It is easy to blame the parents for not doing this and that, but sometimes all that is needed and/or wanted is a helping hand from some else. Physical investment in our youth is crucial. No large financial investment is necessary, but what a great yield when 15-20 years from now we read about the professionals, the doctors, the lawyers, the teachers, the accountants, the nurses, and the minister.

A mother and her son came into the church office one Thursday afternoon. The mother said she was at her wits end and wanted to know if the church could assist her and her son. The young man had been ordered to do 80 hours of community service for shoplifting. This was not his first offense. We were down in our staff at the Bargain Box, so I offered them the Bargain Box Too! His mother said that was fine. I think most people would have said not in a store for the temptation will be too great, but the Holy Spirit told me it would be all right. We made an agreement for his work schedule, and he started that Saturday morning.

He was responsible for folding clothes, greeting and assisting customers, and helping in any other area needed. His time at the Bargain Box went extremely well. He

was punctual, very mannerable, cooperative, and interacted well with the other youth. We would talk about special interests, school, God, peer pressure, and life in general. When he could not come to work, he called. To my surprise and joy, one Sunday afternoon this young man joined the church when the invitation to discipleship was extended. He has since completed his community service hours, but still comes to visit Bargain Box Too! from time to time; and attends church regularly. He is doing well in school and has not been in any more trouble. This ministry of listening and caring does work if we recognize that each person is special and the simple path to life is to respect and love each other.

From time to time, bicycles were received. A regular customer came in one evening lamenting that his bicycle had been stolen. He did not want to believe what he saw when we pointed to four bicycles that had been received from the remains of a garage sale. He paid fifteen dollars for his new "ride" and rode home proudly that evening. The stories go on and on. God's light shines on both sides, the shopper and the employee. There are good feelings when one person has helped someone and that person appreciates the assistance.

One Wednesday evening about 8:30 pm, a man came to the church asking about the Bargain Box. The pastor phoned to ask me to take him down to the Bargain Box to see what we could find. This gentleman had been subpoenaed to appear in court the following morning. He had no legal address, and for all practical purposes, he was homeless. One of the married couples in the church, the gentleman, and I walked down the street to the store. We found a pair of pants, a shirt, a sweater, and socks. His taste in clothing was unique, and we convinced him that one type of clothing all together would probably serve best—cotton with cotton and stripes with stripes. The lady stepped in and told him what might look best. The customer liked having a woman's perspective on the

outfit. The husband put the items up to himself and told the man to look at the different clothes. In the course of our conversation, he asked if we had any toiletries. Someone had donated some little packages of soap, lotion, and deodorant earlier in the week. He put on a big grin, took his items and left. Again, we received thanks for being a service.

Caseworkers call the church office to see if we can assist their clients. I usually meet the client and caseworker at the store in the early morning and allow them to shop alone. The limit as to the amount of goods they can purchase if possible is set by the caseworker. If they are unable to pay, they are not refused service. We have been able to assist clients from the Grace House, a mission house for displaced families with children, United Way clients, Greenbriar, a residential home for children, and Project Azuka, an organization that assists women who are HIV positive.

Youth have obtained skills that can be used on future jobs. People who thought they were not worthy have come to feel that they are fearfully and wonderfully made. Self-esteem was evident. Self-confidence levels soared. Several residents of the Chestina House secured outside jobs because of what they learned at the Bargain Box, Too! We helped them, but they helped us more than they know.

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